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CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY;

OR

THE CONNEXION

BETWEEN

EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION.

DESIGNED FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

BY THE

REV. E. MANNERING,

OF HOLYWELL MOUNT CHAPEL.

"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."—1 John ii. 6.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author of this small volume has for some time past been convinced that the subject of which it treats, is, even by a certain class of pious people, misunderstood and neglected. He feels desirous, therefore, of calling their attention to first principles, and of reminding them of the connexion between experimental and practical religion; with a special reference, however, to the welfare of young Christians.

First impressions are, generally, powerful and abiding; and much of the Christian's happiness or sorrow, through life, depends upon the direction which his judgment and heart may receive immediately after conversion. He who starts well, is likely to run well; and although none are safe but those whom the

Lord keeps, yet many Christians regret the bias which early associations gave to their thoughts and feelings, and find, as they advance to maturity, that they have much to unlearn.

Nothing, then, can be of greater importance, than the formation of religious character. As the health and morals of many a child have been ruined by unsound discipline; so the growth of many a babe in Christ has been retarded, and the vigour of his spiritual constitution impaired, as well by the unwholesome moral aliment he has eaten, as by the habits into which early training induced him to settle down.

The Author, happily for him, has a considerable number of youthful converts under his Pastoral superintendence, for whose steadfastness in the faith, and usefulness in the church, he feels deeply interested; and while he watches, with considerable anxiety, the development of their characters, he is concerned that their first movements should be made under the counsel of the Divine Spirit, by the admonitions of the Divine Word. He has, therefore, attempted to collect from the Holy

Scriptures some information, which, in this digested form, he hopes may prove useful to the lambs of his own flock, in particular; and to young disciples of the Holy Saviour, in general.

And if any of the inconsistencies of Christians, further advanced in the Divine life, should, also, be corrected—for admonitions to the young are sometimes beneficial to the aged—the Author's reward will be ample; and he shall rejoice with them in giving glory to the Divine Spirit, "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed."

TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

My dear young friends,

Your claims, on the care of those accustomed to think for eternity, are numerous and pressing; and whatever subjects may occupy their attention, or however powerfully passing events may plead for their consecration to some grand and awakening enterprise, they cannot neglect your spiritual interests, nor abandon them to the control of casual circumstances.

We hold no fellowship with those who attempt to justify inattention to the culture of youthful minds, and who, though they boast of their advancement in Biblical science, refuse the legitimate application of its principles to practical purposes. Why has God given to

us the word of reconciliation, and made that word effectual to our conversion? but that, having received mercy ourselves, we should be instrumental in conveying that mercy to others.

In reading the following pages, you will, I hope, bear in mind that they were written for your "instruction in righteousness;" and you will also, I trust, implore the Holy Spirit to impress the truth so effectually upon your hearts, that it may become interwoven with the experience and practice of every day. I have endeavoured to sketch an outline of principle for you to fill up by repentance toward God, by faith in Christ, and by devotedness to his glory; and I am induced to believe that the course you are here directed to take, will extend your liberty, increase your steadfastness, and augment your comfort. The very thought of the possibility of contributing either to the pride or to the carelessness of the human heart, awakened jealousy over my own movements, lest, by accident or design, I might lead you astray. But having examined what I have written in the light of Revelation, I can but express a humble hope that it will,

by the Divine blessing, be the means of training you both for holy enjoyments, and for spiritual services.

Let me, however, request you to read, not hastily, and without thought, but, deliberately and with reflection. You must think, as you proceed; and inquire into the mind of the Spirit in those passages of Scripture which are introduced either to disclose or to enforce an obligation. Particularly let me urge you to *study* the sixth Chapter, on "Blessings to be realized, and the means of obtaining them;" which, although it consists, principally at least, of citations from the Inspired Volume, is the key to the whole. You have there the will of God, in the very words of God; and from their decision there is no appeal.

Seeking to place sound doctrine and salutary counsel before you, I have endeavoured to be as plain as possible; and whatever may be the result of the step I have taken—which I must, however, hope will be your profit—I shall be consoled by the reflection, that my sole object was to give a Scriptural direction to your faith and labours; so that your Christian progress might be regular and consistent,

and the Great Head of the church honoured by the consecration of your time, and property, and influence, to his service.

There are many safe and useful guides,* of which you will do well to avail yourselves, in your pilgrimage to the skies; but I am not aware that any of them render this view of Christian consistency unnecessary.

And now, my dear young friends, accept, I beseech you, this humble and affectionate tribute of concern for your holiness, happiness, and usefulness; that, together, we may ascribe "salvation and power to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever."

E. MANNERING.

* See Buck's Young Christian's Guide. R. Philip's Guides. James' Anxious Inquirer.

CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION.

Spirituality of character is the Christian's glory; and in proportion to the growth of the graces of the Holy Spirit in his heart, will be his elevation in the scale of moral beauty. Outward circumstances, however adverse, cannot eclipse the splendour of those holy principles which shed their influence alike upon the temper and the conduct of the man of God; nor can the absence of high intellectual endowments throw a shade over the bright and lovely adornings of the lowliest and most obscure of God's servants. Sanctified gifts do, indeed, invest the religion of the heart with powerful attractions; and the peculiarities of rank add weight and inte-

rest to the profession of the serious: yet, the poor and unlettered believer is enshrined in a halo of glory, as spiritual, and as illustrative of the majesty and purity of the truth, as that which rests on mitred heads, bowing before the cross of Immanuel. The people of God are "one in Christ, and every one members one of another." They derive their life from the same source, through the same medium, for the same purpose; and being "baptized by one Spirit into one body," their minor distinctions of name and character are lost. Ought they not then, to "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," and "earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints?"

But we fear that professed Christians are too inattentive to that state of heart, which is identified, both in its existence and results, with whatever is lovely in the Gospel, delightful in Christian experience, and consistent in practical godliness. Salvation is both free and full; but it can be neither understood nor enjoyed, unless the heart be under the influence of that grace which sanctifies, while it saves. God may, and frequently does,

impart life and peace to his people when they are inattentive to his requirements, and have even forgotten their obligations to his love; (Isaiah lxv. 1;) but they have no scriptural authority for expecting the supplies of his Spirit in any other order than in that he has prescribed in the preceptive part of his word; and the Spirit, whensoever bestowed, is given that evil might be suppressed, never that it might be fostered.

No principle in science, no axiom in philosophy, is more obvious, than the connexion of cause and effect in theology; and he who has never seen this connexion, or, having seen it, will not pursue the course it points out, has adopted a speculative system of religion, which, if not relinquished, will eternally ruin him. All error is dangerous; and he who rejects the fundamental doctrines of grace, is not in a more pitiable and dangerous condition than he, who, though tenaciously adhering to the truth in sentiment, forgets that between the enjoyment of God's presence, and the purity of the heart in which he dwells, there is an unbroken connexion. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him keep his

tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." (1 Pet. iii. 10.)

If the passage, just cited, be regarded in its obvious meaning, the connexion to which an allusion has been made will appear. Good days are in reserve for him whose tongue is kept from evil, and whose lips are free from guile. Is this the order of God's procedure in blessing his people? Then, some one may reply, "their happiness is dependent, not on his free and unmerited favour, but on their efforts, and thus the glory of truth is at once obscured, and the work of the Holy Spirit dishonoured." A moment's attention to this objection will be sufficient for its refutation. "Without me," said the Saviour, "ye can do nothing;" (John xv. 5;) and "I," said the Apostle, "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.) Nothing, therefore, can be done by the believer without Divine assistance; but, influenced by the Holy Spirit, the most difficult duties can be discharged. From this admission arises the question, what is God's prescribed order of giving that assistance which disposes and enables the Christian to do his

will? "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John xv. 4.) Here is the order—union to Christ, and the consequent abiding of the soul in Christ. If a branch be severed from the tree, will it not die? God could cause it to blossom, as he did Aaron's rod, when it was laid up before the ark of the covenant; but the question is not, what can he do? but, what are the laws by which vegetation is carried forward? The husbandman cannot reap the harvest without first sowing the seed; and none can enjoy the life of God, while they neglect the means by which it is communicated. To keep the tongue from evil, is essential to the seeing of good days; but it does not follow, neither is it true, that these happy times are merited by the bridling of this unruly member. "By the grace of God I am what I am;" (1 Cor. xv. 10;) and we could as soon create a world as purchase his favour. Still, we cannot expect to receive the blessings of the Gospel, and to be satisfied with his mercy, except in his own way. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in

my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." (Ps. lxxxix. 30–32.)

It must, then, in this place, be distinctly stated; first, that God has his prescribed order of blessing, and of working in the hearts of his people; secondly, that in this order alone can they reasonably hope to receive his blessing; and, thirdly, that in exhorting them to seek the fulfilment of the Divine promises in this way—yea, in *charging* them to seek them in no other way; and in assuring them, that by observing God's order, and seeking his presence when, and where, that order may lead them, they may expect to walk in the light of it; we disclaim, most sincerely, all attempts to legalize his motives, or to draw him from the simplicity of the Gospel.

Such an avowal is rendered necessary by the fastidiousness of some pious people. From an anxiety to honour God, whose grace is the source of all moral excellence; and from a lawful jealousy for the glory of the Eternal Spirit, the Author of all true religion, they

are imperceptibly led into error. Guarding against one mistake, they fall into another; and not observing God's ordinary procedure, they stumble on the threshold of that truth, which, if crossed, would admit them to the fulness and sufficiency of the Gospel. Extremes of *truth* are even dangerous; and we would avoid both the legality of the Pelagian, and the licentiousness of the Antinomian; believing it to be both safe and expedient to seek God's blessing where his word assures us it may be found. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even *they* shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." (Ps. cvii. 42.)

In perfect accordance with these observations, is the conviction, that grace is given for experimental and practical purposes; and, consequently, that faith and works are inseparably connected. God imparts his Spirit for his own glory, as well as for our comfort; and, indeed, his own glory is the end of all he does both for us and within us; but it is difficult to conceive how he can be glorified by his people if they despise his authority. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought him-

self also so to walk, even as he walked;" (1 John ii. 6;) and he who really loves God, will manifest that attachment by "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance." "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." (1 John ii. 4, 5.) To confess that we are sinners, that we daily discover more of the Saviour's beauty, and that our knowledge of his truth increases, is easy indeed! But what proportion does our practice bear to our experience? Does our light shine before men? Does our sense of evil induce us to hate it, and to flee from it? Experience must be tested by practice; and that experience that is unconnected with a subdued temper in particular, and that does not influence the life in general, is not of God; neither will he own it in the day of trial. An increase of faith is always attended by an increase of humility; the heart in which are sown the seeds of righteousnes, will bear the fruits of holiness; and the spirit, richly imbued with an experimental knowledge of the

Lord, will leave a savour upon every thing she touches; and from her altars will arise the sweetest odours, convincing all who observe her tendency, that the fire of the Holy Ghost is there. The nearer a man comes to God by faith, the more like God will he be; and every interview with which God indulges him, will bring him more fully out of nature into grace. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) While he imbibes the spirit, he retains the impression of truth: and the love of Christ constraining him, his life becomes the practical comment of his creed. By experience, the truth is established in the heart, and its beauty and purity are also made to adorn the life; and its sanctifying influences never so entirely govern the character, as when the soul's experience of its power is vivid and full. *He* knows nothing experimentally of the doctrines of election, of redemption, and of justification, who evinces nothing of their holiness and love in his outward demeanour. "A good man out of the

good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things;" (Matt. xii. 35;) and his approximation to the holiness of truth, will be in proportion to his knowledge of the power of truth. All the truths of the Gospel are connected; but while they are identified in character and design, they are distinct in their bearings, and peculiar in their influence. Every truth is full of grace, but each truth has grace peculiarly its own; and to be filled with the grace of truth, we must not only receive "the truth in the love of it," but also that peculiar grace which each truth contains. Words are only so far useful as they are vehicles of thought; and truth is influential only when it becomes the medium of life to our souls, of light to our understandings, and of love to our hearts. And from passing over this fact as trivial and unimportant, many are orthodox in sentiment, whose lives form a mournful contrast to the example of Christ and his apostles. "The devils believe and tremble;" (James ii. 19;) but they neither love nor obey the truth; and it is idle for any man to talk of his knowledge of the Gospel, unless he has been subdued by its power, and

transformed into its purity. Truth is vital in its nature; and therefore conduces, in its operations, to that frame of mind, and to that cast of character, which is at once the indication and proof of regeneration. The truth, therefore, cannot dwell in that heart over which sin and Satan dominate. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;" (John vi. 63;) they contain the elements of life, and are the means of the soul's inspiration; so that if they be heard and received, they will secure the consecration of body and soul to the Redeemer's praise. Is there not love in the doctrine of election? Freedom from sin in the doctrine of redemption? Then, to be saved, to be comforted, and to be rendered fruitful by these doctrines, we must receive them, not in the letter or outward form, but in their spirit and inward glory: and this reception, being vitally experimental, and therefore connected with feeding on Christ, the essential Word, will call forth that love and zeal which are evidences of adoption into the family of God.

On these principles we are able to account

for the difference, not only between the nominal professor, and the true child of God, but also between one Christian and another. Both believe the same truths, and avow their dependence on the same Spirit; but how marked is their disproportion of experience and practice! The one is fruitful, happy, and in health; the other is barren, mournful, and sickly: he lives, it is true, but it is a meagre, heartless life; and though fed at the King's table, and admitted to all the privileges of his house, he is unlike the Master he professes to serve. His manner is uncourteous, and his temper morose; he is irritable, peevish, soon angry, and easily provoked;—his wife, his children, and his servants suffer from his inconsistencies; and if they have any sense of Christian propriety, they can but weep at this ominous defection of Christian principle. And yet, with all these practical departures from the Spirit of truth, the doctrines of the Gospel are professedly revered. The preacher must, to please persons of this description, always balance the higher scales of personal, unconditional election, and absolute predestination; and any attempts on his part to secure the practical results of faith in Christ are denoun-

ced as the efforts of Pharisaical pride, or pitied as the simple and ill-timed effusions of a mere babe in Divinity. But with all this apparent zeal for the Saviour's glory, the mind that was in him is not in them; and fearful, indeed, are the proofs which their inconsistencies supply of the almost total absence of Divine life, and of spiritual knowledge.

How observable, then, is the difference between one professor and another! the one receives the doctrine only, the other the truth of the doctrine; the one gathers the fruit only, the other eats it; the one is amused at the sound of salvation, the other is cheered by its sentiment; the one reads and admires the truth, the other enters upon its possession; and while the one is debating and speculating, the other is proving and rejoicing. The humble believer endeavours to realize the power, that he may exemplify the influence, of the doctrines; he is anxious that the seed should germinate, and that the food should digest. Here, then, is the secret of doctrinal and of practical experience; nor can we ever be fruitful Christians but in this way, and by these means. If the Holy Spirit has taught us the

doctrine of election, we have received the love of it into our hearts. If the source be love, the stream must be love; and while an uninfluential knowledge of this most holy and profound truth may satisfy the speculative professor, and become the charm of his awful delusions; he whose heart has been directed into it, will evince his fellowship with it, by deep humility, by pungency of sorrow for sin, and by a conscientious regard to the Divine will. And as with the doctrine of election, so with every other doctrine of the Gospel; the purity, the life, and the comfort of truth must be received, or our knowledge will be useless, and our profession vain. Have I received the Gospel, then, "in word only; or in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?" Have I only the theory of truth in my understanding, or have its influences sanctified my heart? are my fondest hopes entwined around it, amid the delusions of unsubdued depravity? or, while I glory in its adaptation to the guilty, am I delighted with its sufficiency to purify the unclean?

Reader, these questions deserve thy most serious attention!

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK.

Upon a spiritual reception, and an experimental knowledge of "the truth, as it is in Jesus," depends the consistency, the regularity, and the peace of the believer's walk in the path of obedience. He cannot serve God acceptably without faith in Christ; but having been renewed in the spirit of his mind, he cannot serve Satan and the world. Christ's love to his Church was a benevolent love: "For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" (Matt. xx. 28;) and when that love is shed abroad in our hearts, it will lead us "to serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." (Luke i. 75.) To love Christ and to obey him, are so identified, that he who neglects or despises the precepts of the Gospel, renders his conversion doubtful. What proof do I give of love to Jesus, if I dis-

regard his precepts? And how can my heart be under the constraining influence of his grace, if I walk not in the way of his statutes? His attractions are holy and spiritual; and if I am subject to his Divine guidance, must I not follow him as well to the field of labour, as to the pasture of rest? The blessedness of experimental religion partly consists in the consecration of all our powers of body and mind to his service; and the very enjoyments of his love will induce, as a necessary consequence, devotion to his glory. Love toils to express her sense of obligation to the Redeemer; and while faith and prudence regulate her procedure, there will be so striking a manifestation of the effects of Divine grace, that even the enemies of the cross will be constrained to acknowledge the purity and power of Christian principle. And whatever may be the actual proportion of practice to the privilege from which it proceeds, there can be no joy in the heart, if the life be unsanctified, and in hostility to the Saviour's claims. There is a link between privilege and duty which no man can break; and he who attempts to destroy the established order of Divine wisdom, in her

munificent donations of mercy to "miserable sinners," has not departed further from the truth, and is not more deluded, than he who expects joy and peace apart from the purifying influence of the truth, from which, nevertheless, he professes to derive his comfort and his hope. Oh, never may we be permitted to insult the Deity by seeking redemption from hell, while we are indifferent about meetness for heaven! Language does not supply us with terms sufficiently expressive of our abhorrence of that system of theology that genders laxity of morals, or even attaches unimportance to the precepts of the Gospel. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Pet. iii. 11.) "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.)

But in what does the Christian's walk consist? "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. vi. 8.) Thy walk, therefore, includes the progress of

the heart in the knowledge and enjoyment of his love; and the actions of the life, with the improved, and improving condition of their motives. This is evident from the following passages, among others, which might be cited. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. ii. 6, 7.) "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,

let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." (Eph. iv. 29—32; v. 1—4.) "Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thess. iv. 1—3.) "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (Gal. vi. 16.) "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. iv. 1, 2.) "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. v. 15, 16.) "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom

and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 9, 10.)

But why should I multiply citations? Again, and again, are we urged in Scripture by arguments the most powerful, and by motives the most persuasive, to do the will of God. The apostles admit that Divine grace, when experienced, will secure obedience; and for this reason they generally remind believers of their privileges, before they enforce their obligations; but they do not, on this account, fail to press duty: on the contrary, as fulness of doctrine involves perfection of precept, they are practical in proportion as they are doctrinal. There must be an effort to perform the work which naturally results from union to Christ; and our desires to enjoy the presence of God are not to be more intense, than are our persevering endeavours to serve God. It is our privilege to sit at his feet, to feed at his table, and, oh that we were more concerned to enjoy his presence! But are we not bound to his service, and blessed in his employment? In speaking to us as a Master, does he not

converse with us as a Father? Are there not fountains of water to refresh us in the desert, across which duty leads us? Is not the husbandman a partaker of the fruits? Does not every step we take in this obedient course place us, by the strength he affords, under additional obligations to love him? Has not our hope of eternal life often been encouraged by those assurances of his protection and favour, which were given to quicken our pace, when sent by him on some errand of mercy? Oh, the blessedness of practical faith! How sweet are the ties of gratitude that bind us to the Saviour's service! We would not have them broken for the wealth of worlds. Let who will forget the Saviour's authority, be it your concern, my dear young friends, to remember it; for when your consciousness of his Priesthood is most vivid, your conceptions of his Kingly authority will be most accurate.

But none can walk so as to please God, whose hearts are not right with him. Christian practice must flow from Christian principle; and reconciliation to God by the death of his Son must precede acceptable obedience. We work, not *for* life, but *from* life; not to

obtain a righteousness, but because we have received one: yet even this fact does not justify inattention to the actual state of our affections. No: we must still seek to please our heavenly Father, and diligently cultivate spirituality of mind. Lovely as external consistency may be in the eye of man, and conclusive as may be its argumentative evidence in favour of a change of heart, it must not always be regarded as an expression of soul prosperity. A thousand inducements to an orderly observance of precept, may influence the life, when the heart is departing from God after its idols; and when its best and holiest feelings are withering, like the herb from which the dews of heaven have been suspended. Sad indeed, and frequent too, are the declensions of the life and power of religion in the heart where Jesus dwells! Hence the necessity of watchfulness against evil, and prayer to the Holy Spirit for his renewing grace! Our own vineyard must not be neglected; and, amid all the excitements to public labour which the moral movements of the Christian church are so well adapted to awaken, there must be an undeviating attention to the health

and growth of the inner man. Our own walk with God is of paramount importance. Under no circumstances are we justified in neglecting those means which are calculated to promote communion with the Saviour; and which, because of their holy tendency, are enjoined upon our attention. The true spring of religious activity is that which impels the soul in her course of believing; and *that* Christian will diffuse much of the odour of the name of Jesus, whose heart is filled with its fragrance. Peter and John were so entirely under the influence of Divine truth, that their enemies "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts iv. 13.) The glory of the Master reflected lustre upon his servants; and they came from the mount of communion with their Lord, to tell what they had seen of his majesty, what they had felt of his power, and to scatter the blessings with which he had enriched them. They drank of "living water" so abundantly, that its streams overflowed their spirits to fertilize the wastes around them. And whoever would be a blessing to his friends and neighbours, must himself be first blessed of God.

Let us, then, attend to that state of heart which will fit us for duty, and render labour as well as rest desirable. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phil. iv. 8, 9.) Let the actions of every day, and of every hour, accord with the truth on which your hopes of eternal life repose. For "if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing." (1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.) The truth is to be both preached and believed for holy purposes; and when its power is felt, its authority will be acknowledged. He who professes to love the truth, but does not obey it, is either awfully deceived, or is an hypocritical deceiver; and, being condemned by his own actions, is proved to be "in the gall

of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." The grace of God leads from sin and the world, to holiness and the church. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly;" not occasionally, but perpetually; "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works;" (Titus iii. 8;) that they might not expect them as a matter of course, and therefore be indifferent either to their number or character; but that they might give heed to them; and that not now and then only, but at all times; so that, whether they be poor or rich, young or old, masters or servants, husbands or wives, parents or children, preachers or hearers, they be not unfruitful, but "learn to maintain good works for necessary uses." (Titus iii. 14.) If light and darkness, truth and error, are not more incompatible, than love to Christ and departure from his ways, what a fearful condition must they be in who cry, "Lord, Lord, and do not the things he commands them!" Of all the awful characters upon earth, they are the most awful who hold the truth in unrighteousness; "while they promise them liberty, they themselves

are the servants of corruption." Attempting to unite the church and the world, they convert the aliment of life into the poison of death; and the charms of sovereign grace become the spell by which the devil holds them in captivity. Oh! may we be more sensible of the grace that has made us to differ, more thankful for its discriminating influence, more humbled under a sense of our deficiencies, and more concerned for Christian consistency!

CHAPTER III.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK.

First: The glory of God is involved in it; and he is not more honoured in the election, in the redemption, in the conversion, and in the eternal glorification of his people, than he is by their sanctification. His purpose *before* time, not only contemplated their happiness *beyond* time, but made provision for their emancipation from sin and death *in* time. "According as he hath chosen us in him

(Christ) before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." (Eph. i. 4.) "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John xv. 8.) Nor is it possible to honour a single perfection of his nature, without obedience to his will. The character of a tree is known by the fruit it bears; and does not the fruitfulness of the believer manifest the care, the wisdom, and the love of God? "When the trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted," passing observers are struck with their healthful and beautiful foliage; and as grace cannot flourish in this unkindly world without heavenly influences, our growth, as well as our fruitfulness, must depend on their communication. We are indebted as much to God for disposition as for ability, to serve him; and when we do his will, and bear his image, is he not glorified? "Thou, O Lord, hast wrought all our works in us;" (Isa. xxvi. 12;) the principle is thine, the strength by which it settles down into habit is thine, and thine, O Lord, shall be the glory!

And let it be distinctly understood, that however retiring the people of God may be, they cannot conceal the fact of their conversion. The light they borrow from the Sun of Righteousness is diffusive; and their elevation above the world must be sustained, as well by spirituality of demeanour, as by dignity of character. The principles of grace have ever been, and ever will be, distinct from those of nature; and the Christian must never compromise the former, for any secular or temporary advantages that may be proffered by the latter. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.)

Secondly. The enjoyment of the Divine presence, and the refreshing manifestations of the Saviour's love, are involved in that holy and spiritual walk which every believer is bound to observe. The visits of the Divine Spirit, in all the delightful and endearing associations of his office and character, as the Glorifier of Jesus, and the Witness of his mercy, are, indeed, never merited by the services and

sacrifices of his people; yet are they vouchsafed to the obedient, and withheld from the rebellious. With the Bible in our hands, and its truth in our hearts, we cannot expect a lively sense of our Father's approbation, if we neglect his service. Nor must we refer our soul's distress to the sovereign arrangements and immutable decrees of Deity; for this would be as absurd as to say that light was the cause of darkness, and heat the cause of cold. No: we must take the blame to ourselves; the cause is with us. Some unmortified temper, some unhallowed indulgence, some practical departure from the spirit of the Gospel has beclouded our prospects. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isa. lix. 1, 2.)

Let it not be supposed that the doctrine of Divine sovereignty is denied, or that the manifestations of the Divine favour are dependent on the worth of the creature. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;"

(Eph. i. 11;) and the light he sheds, and the darkness he diffuses, around the path of the just, harmonize with his righteous determinations both to bless and to chastise them. But then, although "His thoughts are thoughts of peace," and although he gives grace freely, his purposes to afflict them, by withdrawing from them the light of his countenance, were in pursuance of his discovery of their actual departures from him. "He does not afflict willingly," (Lam. iii. 33,) nor because it is customary for a father to correct his child; but because they deserve, and need, the visitations of his displeasure. We deserve misery, but we never merit mercy. "Oh! Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help;" (Hos. xiii. 9;) and never is the connexion between experimental and practical religion rendered more apparent by the Divine procedure, than when the reviving and fructifying influences of the Holy Spirit are withheld from that vineyard which the Christian neglects to cultivate.

The world of nature is governed by laws so wise in their constitution, so accurately adjusted in their controlling proportions, and so un-

yielding in their influence, that not a season can depart, nor a planet revolve, nor a leaf fall, without their cognizance and authority; and while the astronomer can calculate with unerring exactness on the movements of the heavenly bodies, the philosopher argues from principles which never deceive. And is not the world of grace, also, governed by equitable laws? If there be an order of things from which, in working the vast machinery of the heavens above, and of the earth beneath, there is not even a slight deviation; surely the pleasures and the pains of the moral world are suspended on the balance of justice and truth. In the administration of Divine mercy towards the ungodly, the principles of right government are never violated, any more than the glory of God's justice is tarnished by the execution of his vengeance on the impenitent. And not more certain are we, that effects will follow their causes in nature, than that they will in grace. Natural impossibilities are conclusive in their evidence to the perfection and harmony of natural laws; and moral impossibilities are full in their evidence to the righteousness and mercy of spiritual laws. The law

of gravitation accounts for the tendency of bodies to their centre; and if that law could be in part violated, or entirely suspended, would there not be confusion and disorder among those bodies, then no longer under its control? Or, if the bodies themselves, by an accession of weight or diminution of size, could defy this law;—for the power to gravitate must bear a relative proportion to the magnitude and density of the object subject to its influence;—how fearful would be the consequences! And he, whose science of theology is that of the heart, and not of the head, can calculate with certainty upon the results, both of vital piety and of declining devotion. Let me disregard the will of God; let me be indifferent as to the course I take, the society I choose, the spirit I imbibe; and with almost inspired infallibility I can predict the consequences. Here is my position; here are my deductions —"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James iv. 8.) "Forsake him, and he will forsake you." (2 Chron. xv. 2.) "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness

be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bone; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. lviii. 10, 11.)

Thirdly. The honour of truth, also, requires our consecration to the Saviour's glory. That ye were the servants of sin, is a mournful and humbling fact; but that ye have obeyed from the heart that form, or mould, of doctrine, which was delivered to you by the Gospel, and into which mould ye were cast for the purpose of being fashioned after its likeness, is a cheering reflection. (Rom. vi. 17.) "Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things which are God's;" and as the coin is known by the superscription it bears, so ought the character of truth to be known by the temper and conversation of those who profess to love it. It was predicted of God's people, "All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" (Is. lxi. 9;) and when, by the power of the Gospel, the proud and depraved heart of man is

subdued into the meekness and gentleness of Christ, wicked men have been constrained to confess—"The finger of God is here." Truth is influential in its principles, and practical in its tendency; and our appeals for evidence of its Divinity must be made, not only to the writings of those "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" but also to the lives of those who believe "the record which God hath given of his Son." "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.)

The doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures occupies, however, higher ground than that on which the conduct of the believer may place it. Christianity is not answerable for the defections of her votaries; neither are the evidences of her Divinity weakened by the palpable inconsistency of her admirers, any more than the accuracy of mathematical calculation is im-

peached by the errors and mistakes of the child who attempts to solve its problems. It is to the absence, and not to the presence, of truth, that the imperfections of its professors are attributable. Were the doctrines of grace better understood; had their lovely spirit been more effectually imbibed; and had the church in all ages been more sensible of the capabilities with which they invest her for service, as well as for enjoyment, fewer objections would have been raised against them. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 14.) And it is as much the Christian's duty "to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good," as it is his privilege to hold "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 3.) "Exhort servants," was Paul's charge to Titus, "to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all

things." (Tit. ii. 9, 10.) And this is equally applicable to all the servants of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL ADORNED BY CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.

To adorn, is either to beautify that which is deformed, or to exhibit the loveliness and excellency of that which is already beautiful; and it is in the latter sense that we are to adorn "the doctrine of God our Saviour." We cannot add to it a single charm; its glory is perfect: all that we can do is to commend it to the understanding and hearts of others, by giving a full, consistent, and unvarying expression of its character and design. We are so to live and act, that the truth may not be brought into disrepute; but that others, seeing what it has done for us, may be constrained to confess "it is worthy of all acceptation," and deserves their attention and love. "He that winneth souls is wise;" (Pr. xi.

30;) and by a good conversation we are to attempt the conversion of sinners. (1 Pet. iii. 1.)

But there are reasons for believing that the doctrine is dishonoured, even by those who profess to love it: they will, as it were, fight, sword in hand, for its measure of glory in the scale of theology, but they exhibit none, or but little, of its essential loveliness; nor any of the meekness and humility which are its relative, not its accidental, attendants. They do, indeed, abstain from outward immorality; but their general cast of character is so unlike what it ought to be, and what it would be if the truth had influence over them, that unbelievers are often heard to say—"If I judge of the doctrine by the spirit and conduct of those who profess it, I must decide both against its divinity and its utility." What a blessing would the truth be to the world and to the church, if all professed Christians expressed its holiness by every word they utter, by every temper they cultivate, and by every action they perform. But, alas! their spirit is often so unlovely, and their deeds so like those of worldly men, that they have brought

the truth into contempt by the very means they have employed for its honour; and have caused its expulsion, where they have expected its enthronement. The doctrine is already glorious in the judgment of the true Christian; and we are to display this glory in practical life: having imbibed its spirit, we are to develope its principles; we are first to be arrayed in its beauties, and then to exhibit them. The truth in us, ought to be what it actually is in the Bible; and we cannot confer a greater blessing on those around us, than we shall do by holding forth the word of life in all its purity and power, not so much by strength of argument, as by Christian consistency. Many *read our character*, who never *study the Bible;* and be our character humble or proud, holy or impure, it will produce relative convictions in the minds of those who read it. We cannot, it is true, convince them of their depravity, nor destroy their enmity against God; but we shall either weaken or strengthen their prejudices by the spirit we breathe. If we profess Christ, and yet walk contrary to his laws, we raise in their minds a doubt of our sincerity, or lead

them to question the truth of the system we have embraced. They are quick to discern our failures; and by a trifling inconsistency we arm them with weapons which they are sure successfully to employ against us. As character is ascertained by little things, we cannot be too cautious of its general indications. Much circumspection, too, is required in the familiar interchanges of social life, lest by a word, or by a look, we eclipse the beauty and destroy the harmony of the truth we seek to commend to those about us. One false step may lead hundreds astray; and one inconsistent action may entirely weaken the force of an argument in the judgment of our enemies; even though the argument be one of the most momentous that can engage their attention, and although the inconsistency be one of the most trifling ever brought under their cognizance. How anxious, then, should we be to adorn the doctrine which gives to our profession all its interest, and all its value!

Let me here point out a few of those mistakes into which individuals are sometimes

drawn, and which, because of their influence, are opposed to consistency.

There are a number of persons who, in their zeal to maintain the doctrines of the Gospel, almost entirely neglect precept. Practical preaching, even though it be in conformity to the ministry of Christ and his apostles, is not at all palatable; and there are even preachers of the word who encourage opposition to an honest enforcement of God's statutes. In some, this arises from an unsanctified heart, which, being in love with sin, cannot bear its exposure; in others, from a concern for the glory of the Divine Spirit, out of whose hands, it is said, practical preachers attempt to take his work; but in all, *it is the effect of partial and perverted views of truth.* They will not search the Scriptures on the subject; but, hastily adopting the creed of a party, and which is to them an infallible standard of judgment, they condemn, or pity, all who differ from them; and sacrifice the harmony of the Gospel to the demands of sectarian bigotry.

Then, there are others who fly to the op-

posite extreme. Not approving of doctrine themselves, they censure all who do; and avoid, as much as possible, both in their preaching and hearing, any distinct or specific allusion to the truth for which the reformers bled. Sincere these persons may be; but they are certainly in error. If God intended that his people should either neglect or despise doctrine, he would not have revealed it; or he would, by some line of demarcation, have limited our faith. Besides, practical godliness must be sustained by motive, as well as governed by rule; and where are motives to holy obedience to be found, if not in "the doctrine which is according to godliness."

"Christianity," says a writer, "must be embraced entirely, if it be received at all. It must be taken without mutilation, as a perfect scheme, in the way in which God has been pleased to reveal it. It must be accepted, not as exhibiting beautiful parts, but as presenting one consummate whole, the perfection of which arises from coherence and dependence, from relation and consistency. Its powers will be weakened, and its energy destroyed,

if every caviller pull out a pin. There is no breaking this system into portions, of which we are at liberty to choose one and reject the other: there is no separating the precepts from the doctrines, nor the doctrines from the precepts.

"The practice of religion will always thrive in proportion as its doctrines are generally understood, and firmly believed: and the practice will degenerate and decay, in proportion as the doctrine is misunderstood and neglected. It is true, therefore, that it is the great duty of a preacher of the Gospel to press the practice of its precepts, on the consciences of men: but then, it is equally true, that it is his duty to enforce this practice in a particular way, namely, by inculcating its doctrines. The motives which the revealed doctrines furnish, are the only motives he has to do with, and the only motives by which religious duty can be effectually enforced. Genuine faith in the doctrines of grace uniformly promotes practical and experimental religion. It is from the doctrines of the Gospel that Christians derive peace in trouble, strength in weakness, comfort in life, and hope in death."

Others, again, shun doctrine, and the ministry that unfolds and enforces it, because it has been applied to purposes of licentiousness; and because a professed attachment to it has sometimes been a cloak to dishonesty and crime. This, however, is unwise. For the same reason that timid minds avoid the doctrines of the Gospel, might we refuse to use the blessings of a kind and gracious Providence. Food and clothing, money and social intercourse, have all been abused to the injury and death of thousands; but who would, on this account, become a recluse, or cease to eat and drink? The abuse of a principle is no argument against its utility; nor any good reason why it should be discarded. That persons hold the truth in ungodliness is a mournful fact; but does this justify an abandonment of truth altogether? Or are we from hence to infer, that all who embrace it must necessarily live unholily? We must distinguish between the legitimate tendency of a doctrine, and the result of its perversion; and if it be essentially holy in its nature, and, therefore, sanctifying in its influence, why should we avoid it because ungodly men wrest it to their own de-

struction? The sinfulness of the proud professor, who, though he boasts of his eternal election to life, is indifferent about that purity of heart which is an evidence of God's love, is no valid objection to the doctrine he maintains. The truth is good, and when rightly used will produce whatever is lovely in temper, and consistent in practice; but he abuses it, and therefore obscures its glory, and escapes its control.

St. Paul, in the first epistle to Timothy, the first chapter, and at the ninth verse, drawing a catalogue of sins, against which the denunciations of the law are most eminently levelled, closes the list with these words—'*And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*' A plain intimation that error in principles fundamental has a very unfavourable influence upon practicals; and that, in proportion as the doctrines of God are disbelieved, the commandments of God will be disobeyed. Doctrinals, therefore, are not of that small significance which the injudicious and the heterodox affect to give out. For, though matters of doctrine are by some considered merely as the shell of religion, and

experience only as the kernel, yet let it be remembered that there is no coming at the kernel but through the shell; and while the kernel gives value to the shell, the shell is the guardian of the kernel. Destroy that, and you injure this.

The apostle stamps the evangelical doctrines with the seal of dignity, usefulness, and importance, as is evident from the epithet he makes use of: he calls the system of Gospel truths, *sound doctrine;* salutary, health-giving doctrine: not only right and sound in itself, but conducing to the spiritual strength and health of those that receive it; doctrine that operates like some efficacious restorative on an exhausted constitution; that renders the sin-sick souls of men healthy, vigorous, and thriving; that causes them, through the blessing of Divine grace, to grow as the lily, and to cast forth the root as Lebanon; to revive as the corn, and to flourish as the vine; to diffuse their branches, and rival the olive tree in beauty and fruitfulness. On the other hand, unsound doctrine has the opposite effects. It impoverishes our views of God; withers our hopes; makes our faith languid; blasts our spi-

ritual enjoyments; and lays the very axe to the root of Christian obedience.

Others, again, are deeply concerned to walk worthy of their holy calling, without any acknowledgment of doctrine; as if the precepts they are to obey, had no relation to the doctrines they are to believe. Conscious of their obligations, they attempt to discharge them; but having no accurate knowledge of the truth out of which they arise, they toil hard without bringing any glory to God. Their motives are legalized, and their actions, in consequence, though numerous and splendid, are scarcely evangelical. The great point of consideration with us should be, to exhibit truth in all its fair and lovely proportions; that having studied the Bible, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we may become "the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." We have no authority for transposing either doctrine or precept; or for giving an undue, and therefore an unscriptural prominency to any favourite truth. To be partial, either in our views or our attachments, is to reflect on Divine Wisdom for not systematically arranging his thoughts and purposes to meet our pe-

culiar predilections. What right have we to think of disturbing the order in which he has placed the privileges we are to enjoy, and the duties we are to discharge? And what occasion is there for attempting this moral outrage, which not only mars the beauty of truth, but which even destroys its adaptation to relieve and bless us? *Truth ceases to be truth, out of its connexion;* and if we destroy its proportions, by giving an undue importance to either of its component parts, we devise a scheme which, if it operate at all, must injure, but can never bless us. If we bestow upon one doctrine, or upon one precept, the attention and love which ought to be equalized upon twenty; or if, out of any given number of truths, alike Divine, and therefore possessing equal claims upon our faith, we select a few, and reject the rest, we destroy the proper influence of all. One truth, however important it may be, is only a link in the chain of salvation, and is of use only in its connexion with other truths; and by sectarian partiality for either a doctrine or a precept, we break that connexion, and bring ourselves under an

influence, which, as it is partial in its character, cannot be universal in its control.

The several parts of the human body are not more wisely adjusted than are the truths of the Gospel; and if any of these physical or moral dependencies are destroyed, the results, in either case, are most deeply affecting. The balance of truth, like that of the mind, must be preserved, or a theological aberration will ensue; and the reason why the growth of piety in the hearts of some is unsound, irregular, and uncertain, is, that it is fed with only one sort of moral aliment, and is subject either to no discipline at all, or to the reckless guidance of accidental circumstances. The man, and not a part of the man, but the whole man, must be both subdued and trained; and to secure this, the whole moral machinery of truth must be employed, and not a part of it: the doctrine, as well as the precept; the precept, as well as the doctrine. What an unlovely, unsightly monster have some religious votaries held out to the world's view, which, instead of alluring, has repulsed it! And yet, what moral object can be more beautiful than revealed truth! And when her symmetry is

fairly and fully represented by a holy and consistent life, if her enemies are not won, they are silenced. Let there be a perfect and uniform agreement between the church of God and the word of God, and the cause of religion will occupy a vantage ground, from which the puny efforts of a disgusting scepticism, and a reckless infidelity will never be able to remove her. But as long as there remains an obvious discrepancy between the truth revealed and the conduct of the persons who profess to love it, its divinity will be questioned, and its authority denied.

But the doctrines of the Gospel are to be adorned experimentally, as well as practically. And by experience, I mean that trial of Divine things which produces knowledge of their worth, and issues in holy enjoyment of them. We prove a truth when we submit it to a test which has the power of ascertaining its character; and as the truth of the Gospel relates, both in its professions and operations, to the conversion of the heart to God, and its subsequent fellowship with God; and is, at the same time, the instrument by which this change is effected; those who have passed from death

unto life, and are brought into the liberty of the Gospel, have, in their own consciences, a witness of the truth, of which none of their enemies can dispossess them, and which amounts to a positive, personal experience of the grace of God. We may argue much, and experience nothing; and experience a great deal, and be unable to argue at all. Judgment and love, as attributes of the human mind, are not more distinct, than are knowledge and experience in the Christian heart. There can be no experience without knowledge; "for grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord;" (1 Pet. i. 2;) but there may be knowledge without experience. Christianity may be studied as any other system may be; and it is quite possible for a man to defend the truth by argument, while he is destitute of its converting power. Without experience, therefore, man walks in darkness, though surrounded by light; and is no more savingly acquainted with the Gospel, than the confirmed infidel, or the superstitious heathen.

The doctrines of grace, be it remembered, are submitted to us, not for logical, but for

moral demonstration. Some persons delight to occupy the arena of controversy, and to solve the truth with all the nicety of mathematical accuracy; and who would not "contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints?" "Buy the truth, and sell it not." (Pr. xxiii. 23.) But the purchase and contention are not to be for their own sake; the ulterior object, and to which all other considerations are to be in subordination, is the sanctification and joy of the heart; for if a man is unrenewed in the spirit of his mind, what will his knowledge profit him? The love of God the Father is shed abroad in the heart, and is thus known and enjoyed: (Rom. v. 5; 2 Thess. iii. 5:) the atonement of God the Son is received; and thus his propitiatory sacrifice avails, not only for our pardon, but for our health and purity: (Rom. v. 11:) and the influences of God the Holy Ghost are all brought to bear upon our souls for their life and holiness; and thus his work is both felt and approved. (Rom. viii. 9—11.) There can be no delightful experience without a knowledge of the doctrines of grace. Many Christians have very deep conviction of their deserts,

who have but little hope of their safety; and as joy and peace flow from the cross only, we must come "to the blood of sprinkling, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," before we can be happy in the love of God. One man gazes upon the tree of life, but is tempted by Satan to believe that it grows not for him; and another, with stronger faith, plucks its fruit, and reposes under its shadow. We must live upon the doctrines of the Gospel, to be strengthened and refreshed by them. And are they not the very life and glory of our experience? They bring the whole man under a Divine and commanding influence, which, while it relieves the conscience of guilt, and awakens and sustains a hope of glory, bears us onwards in the way of righteousness, to light more pure, and to freedom more perfect.

But what experience adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour? Not that which is dark and dreary, but that which is full of love and full of heaven. Earthly-mindedness, discontentment, unbelief, and slavish fear, dishonour the doctrine, because this state of mind is opposed as much to the promises, as it is to the directions of the Gospel. "The Lord hath

pleasure in the prosperity of his servants;" (Ps. xxxv. 27;) and the comfort and well-being of the flock proclaim not only the care of the Shepherd, but the richness of the pasture in which they feed. And if our experience does not adorn the doctrine, it is because we do not apply it to its legitimate uses; for unless we eat it as food, use it as medicine, and wear it as clothing, it cannot enrich us, neither can we show forth its praises. If our experience were laid open to public view, would it reflect honour on the truth? Would our acquirements in Divine knowledge accredit the wisdom of our Tutor? And would men have to admire the cause, by discovering the glory of its effects? If we are cold and lifeless, we bring the Gospel into disrepute; and induce our observers to question either the truth of the promises, or the faithfulness of the Promiser. Many inquirers after salvation are discouraged by the apparent indifference, or by the palpable inconsistencies of those who have trod the path before them. When listening to a daring, dogmatical preacher, or when conversing with hearers of this description, they ask, with surprise—"What

has the truth done for these men, what do they do more than others? Where is that sweetness of disposition, that condescending attention to others' woes, that simplicity of design, that dignity of thought and feeling, that meekness and gentleness of Christ, which we have been assured are the distinguishing peculiarities of the followers of the Lamb? Alas! we see but little to admire, and much to condemn; and if these are the natural, or inevitable results of receiving the truth into the judgment and heart, then let me for ever be delivered from its influence." "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." (Gen. xlix. 6.) There is often so much bitter zeal on the one hand, and such heartless and freezing formality on the other, that young disciples have sometimes been driven away from the truth they ought to have received, by the injudiciousness and unkindness of those who have attempted to unfold it. But when we converse with men who have the mind of Christ, and whose uniform consistency proves their saving acquaintance with his Gospel, we are led to exclaim—"If such be the peace, the

joy, and the humility, that naturally results from a reception of the truth, when the truth has its full and proper influence upon the character, let me receive it; that this humility, and joy, and peace, and love, may be mine." Wherefore, brethren, seek to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour by an experience of its life and power; and by a consistent, conscientious discharge of the duties it involves.

"So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all Divine.

Thus shall we best proclaim abroad
The honours of our Saviour, God;
While the salvation reigns within,
And grace subdues the power of sin."

CHAPTER V.

THE ORDER OF DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS TO THE SOULS OF MEN, AND THE USE TO BE MADE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

It was stated, in the introductory chapter, that God has his prescribed order of blessing his people, and that out of that order no man

can expect to be blessed;—a proposition which, it is believed, although not distinctly denied, is but imperfectly understood by a large number of the professed followers of the Saviour: hence their depression of soul on the one hand, and their manifest inconsistencies on the other. Some consideration, therefore, of the means and the end, appears to be necessary; "For I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 3.)

It must be remembered, that absolute and unconditional promises abound in the Scriptures; and that, but for their fulfilment, no soul would ever be saved. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the

vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." (Rom. ix. 19—25.)

Who then can deny the absolute right of God to give grace, or to withhold it, as he pleases? And who can dispute the unconditional character of his promises? His creatures owe him every thing, but he owes them nothing; and if, in the exercise of his righteous and sovereign prerogative, he bestows mercy upon one man, how can he inflict positive injury by withholding it from another? Especially as those from whom it is withheld neglect the gift, and despise the Giver. Grace is the fountain of salvation, and sin the cause of damnation. God's purpose is to rescue a given number of the human race from eternal death; and man's purpose is to live without God in this world, although it expose him to his wrath in another. But

this part of Divine truth, though awfully interesting, is not that with which we are now immediately concerned. We are anxious to ascertain God's prescribed order of blessing his people, subsequently to their regeneration, that we may seek, in his own way, the peace and the rest he has promised, and go forth in his strength to discharge our duties.

"And is not this," you will say, "the settled desire of our hearts? Do we not already seek his favour, and the supplies of his Spirit, that, having our hearts enlarged, we may run in the way of his commandments?" Still, we fear that our impressions of personal obligation are too feeble, and our views of practical godliness too indistinct, to issue in any thing like a universal and an impartial attention to his revealed will. Chapters after chapters of the Bible may be read; but unless each chapter and each verse be examined, and their connexion with other verses and other chapters ascertained, reading cannot savingly profit us. A sound theologian is not he who has taken only a cursory view of theological subjects, or who has given to some favourite theme special consideration, passing by others

of equal importance; and he cannot be a consistent Christian who does not, so far as circumstances and opportunities require, devote himself unreservedly to his relative obligations. Much ignorance prevails upon the connexion of precept and promise, as parts of revealed truth; and upon the necessity of obeying the one, in order to be blessed by the fulfilment of the other, as points of Christian experience. Not only is much time and effort lost by an unwise application of our energies for the attainment of important blessings, but we actually impoverish our souls by the very means we employ to enrich them. The people of God, generally speaking, are, if words mean any thing, concerned to receive and to enjoy what he has promised them; and yet, with all their anxiety, and it cannot be too intense, they seldom pursue, with uniform consistency, the course he has prescribed, and in which he has assured them of the manifestations of his presence. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways." (Is. lxiv. 5.) But if we choose our own path, and follow our own devices in the pursuit of

good, we shall wander where God has not promised to meet us. And it must not be said that our departure from the precept, which is the *invariable rule* of our conduct, is excusable on the grounds of human folly and human weakness. In ourselves, indeed, we are as unable to discover what is right, as to do what is right; and had God left us without information and help, it would be impossible for us to know and do his will. But he has given us counsel and promised us strength; and we never fail to render acceptable obedience, except when the one is neglected, and the other despised. The word of God and the Spirit of God must both be honoured, or we shall err in our judgment of truth, and fail in our attempts to practise it; but the more minutely we examine the former, for the purpose of ascertaining, that we may do, the will of the latter, the more likely are we to succeed in our efforts to glorify God.

But who does not perceive that many seek to be enriched and satisfied, not in God's way, but in their own? entirely overlooking, I will not say several important directions placed in different and distant parts of the Divine word,

but even parts of the same verse, from which they seek their enjoyment; and thus they sigh in adversity, when, by the help of the Spirit, if they were wise to discern the vehicle intended to convey their blessings, they might triumph in prosperity. It is not, however, enough for them to *discern* the character and adaptation of truth; they must reduce all its principles to practice; and that, too, not generally or superficially, but each principle must be separately demonstrated, to secure the results for which all are established.

This, it may be said, is imposing a needless task on those who strive for liberty and rest, and one for which they have neither time nor strength. So far is this from being the case, however, and so directly are these surmisings opposed to the truth, that but for the weak in faith, who often err without being conscious of it, we should not pause to notice them; but as some such train of thought is pursued by unestablished believers, it is but right to guard them against it as anti-scriptural in its character, and dangerous in its influence. To say that Christ's commandments are grievous, or that under no circumstances has the Chris-

tian either time or strength to obey them, is to deny what God has affirmed. And it must be remembered, we are not legislating for the church; this is not our prerogative; we are only interpreting the spirit, by examining the letter of Christ's law; and urging obedience in the way and for the ends, he has appointed. We aim at nothing more than this, and we can be satisfied with nothing less.

What, then, is the use we are to make of God's word, and the truth it reveals? Are we *merely to read* the Scriptures, and to store our minds with uninfluential information? Was the Bible written for our amusement? Or, are we at liberty to choose a part, and to reject the rest? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) It is sufficient to meet, not only the requirements of its Divine Author, but all the necessities of his people; and as we may question the divinity of those communications which flow not through the word of God, we cannot expect

to accomplish the Divine will, without it. The purposes of God and the operations of the Holy Ghost, are to secure to us those blessings for which we pray and labour; and the objects to which he applies his word are those for which we profess to use it. The power which renders the word effectual, is entirely his own; but whether it be used by him, without our aid, for the purpose of blessing us; or whether we use it by his counsel and assistance, for his glory in our spiritual improvement; in either case, the success of its application may be expected.

The word, however, must be received before it can be used, and used before its utility can be known. Observe this in the following citations. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." (Col. iii. 16.) "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Jam. i. 21.) "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (1 Thes. i. 6.) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,

because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe;" (1 Thes. ii. 13;) "and which bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." (Col. i. 6.)

Now observe, further—the graces of the Spirit bear a distinct relation to the word of God. It is the object of our faith,[1] and love[2]—the foundation and source of our hope[3]—the subject of our delight[4]—the cause of our joy[5]—and its promises the ultimate end of our desires.[6] You must also bear in mind the character of the word. It is true[7]—sure and unfailing[8]—pure[9]—and powerful.[10] But what is the word, in its adaptation to the con-

[1] Rom. x. 8—17. John xvii. 20. 2 Thes. ii. 13.
[2] Ps. cxix. 97. Eph. iv. 15. 2 Thes. ii. 10.
[3] Ps. cxix. 49, 114. [4] Ps. cxix. 16.
[5] Ps. cxix. 62. Pr. xii. 25. Jer. xv. 16.
[6] Ps. cxxx. 5. Ps. xliii. 3, 4. [7] 2 Cor. i. 19, 20. Tit. i. 9.
[8] 2 Pet. i. 19. Is. xl. 8. Ps. cxix. 89. Ps. c. 5. 1 Kings, viii. 56. [9] Ps. cxix. 140. Pro. xxx. 5.
[10] Heb. iv. 12. Rom. i. 16. Luke iv. 32.

dition and wants of men? It is compared to food [1]—to light [2]—to seed [3]—to a sword [4]—to a shield [5]—to a girdle [6]—to sandals [7]—to medicine [8]—and to rain.[9] And as to the positive use we are to make of it, it is our plea in prayer [10]—it preserves us from destruction [11]—it purifies the heart [12]—it promotes our growth in stability [13]—it is our counsellor [14]—and it gives liberty.[15] By it we are born anew [16]—we are quickened by it [17]—by it we are kept from sin [18]—we are led by it [19]—and by it we are tested, and shall finally be judged.[20]

Such, then, is the character of the word,

[1] Deut. viii. 3. Jer. xv. 16. Ps. cxix. 103.
[2] 2 Pet. i. 19. Ps. cxix. 105. Pr. vi. 23.
[3] Mat. xiii. 19—23. [4] Eph. vi. 17. Rev. xii. 11.
[5] Ps. xci. 4. [6] Eph. vi. 14. [7] Eph. vi. 15.
[8] Ps. cvii. 20. [9] Deut. xxxii. 2. Is. lv. 10, 11.
[10] Neh. i. 8. [11] Ps. xvii. 4. Ps. xl. 11. Ps. lxi. 7.
[12] John xv. 3. xvii. 19. Eph. v. 26. 1 Tim. iv. 5. Ps. cxix. 9. Pr. xvi. 6. 1 Pet. i. 22.
[13] Acts xx. 32. 1 Pet. ii. 2. 1 Tim. iv. 6.
[14] Ps. cxix. 24, 133, 161. [15] John viii. 32
[16] 1 Pet. i. 23. James i. 18.
[17] Ps. cxix. 50. John vi. 63.
[18] Ps. cxix. 11 [19] Pr. vi. 22.
[20] Ps. cv. 19. Deut. xxi. 5. John xii. 48. Rev. xx. 12.

and such the use to be made of it; and if it be but used aright, the Divine blessing must follow. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Luke xi. 28.) "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." (Luke viii. 21.) "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (John viii. 31.) "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." (John viii. 51.) "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.)

Seeing then that so much stress is laid upon receiving, and keeping the word of God; devotedness to the Divine will must bring with it its own reward. "For whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (Jam. i. 25.) To seek any blessing where God has not promised it, or to expect good by other means than those he has

enjoined, is to evince a total disregard to his appointments. And it will be found, if the Scriptures be carefully examined, that the order of means which God has established, is in such perfect keeping with the exercise of his love, and the display of his wisdom, that if it be properly observed, and practically sustained, he will be glorified, and we must be enriched. His injunctions and prohibitions simply amount to a direction to relinquish whatever is opposed to the prosperity of his life in our souls, and to seek, by communion with the Saviour, as well in the path of obedience, as at the throne of mercy, whatever will promote its advancement. "This, then, is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John v. 3.) We *may*, indeed, be called upon to sacrifice many of our outward comforts; and we *must* crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; but in doing this, we are only making room for larger communications of his blessing, and placing ourselves at his feet in a recipient position. "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or

wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark x. 29, 30.)

God never impoverishes, but he intends to enrich; and he never counsels without designing our happiness. But we partly forget, or imperfectly understand this; hence our slothfulness in doing his will, and our indifference about the enjoyment of his presence. If peace and joy, a sense of pardoning mercy, and the witness of the Holy Ghost, be positively and sincerely desired, how is it that they are not continually sought in the way in which they may be found? And if there be confidence in God's wisdom, as well as hope in his mercy, how is it that the details of his preceptive will are *disregarded?* These are points which each Christian should prayerfully examine, and these are tests to which he ought daily to submit both his principles and his practice. Are we, or are we not, seeking the sustaining and sanctifying consolations of the Gospel in God's order? If we are, have we

found them? and if we have not sought, how dare we expect them? To read, and understand, only, will issue in no improvement; but if we study for practical purposes, and determine in Divine strength to regulate our course, both in seeking and doing, by the unerring oracles of truth, a better order of feeling will give birth to a nobler class of actions, and "God in all things will be glorified through Jesus Christ." "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Is. xlviii. 18.)

CHAPTER VI.

BLESSINGS TO BE REALIZED, AND THE MEANS OF OBTAINING THEM.

THE safest course we can pursue, is to select from God's word some of those passages in which the means and the end are united; and by a careful examination of the subjoined citations it will be seen, that between the reception and enjoyment of certain blessings, and

the state of the heart and of the life they are intended to refresh and adorn, there is a close connexion. Presuming on your readiness to search the Scriptures, whether these things be so, the passages are not cited at full length: you will, therefore, it is hoped, read this chapter with your Bibles before you; and, above all, with prayer to the Holy Spirit for his Divine teaching. If you would realize the glory of the promise, you must reduce the precept to practice; and you must not think that the blessings are too numerous to be enjoyed, or that the means are too arduous to be used—"For all things are yours;" (1 Cor. iii. 21;) and "all things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark ix. 23.) You will here ascertain how God intends to supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. iv. 19.)

Access to the grace of justification and to all the blessings of a justified state, is by faith alone. (Rom. v. 1, 2.) To abide under the shadow of the Almighty, you must dwell in the secret place of the Most High; (Ps. xci. 1;) and that you may continue in the Son, and in the Father, the truth of the Gospel must

abide in your hearts. (1 John ii. 24.) Afflictions will work for you an eternal weight of glory—not at all times—but when you contemplate, and affectionately regard heavenly and eternal things; (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18;) and spiritual blessings are apprehended, only when they are ardently pursued. (Phil. iii. 12.) By your drawing nigh to God, God will draw nigh to you; (James iv. 8;) by keeping his commandments, and by loving, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, and by a knowledge of the things which are written in the Scriptures, you are to be assured of your interest in Christ. (1 John ii. 3; iii. 18, 19; v. 13.)

To be beautified with salvation, you must be meek in spirit; (Ps. cxlix. 4;) to be bold for the truth before your enemies, you must commune with Christ; (Acts iv. 13;) and to be blameless in life, and unblameable before God in holiness, you must avoid murmurings and disputings, and abound in brotherly love. (Phil. ii. 14, 15. 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.) The comfort of the heart is promoted by spiritual intercourse with faithful ministers; (Eph. vi. 22;) by the prospect of Christ's second com-

ing; (1 Thess. iv. 18;) and by a firm faith in the oath and promise of God. (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) Gainsayers are to be convinced by your holding fast the faithful word; (Tit. i. 9, 13;) and with well-doing you are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Pet. ii. 15.) The crown of life is promised to those, and to those only, who endure temptation, and are faithful unto death. (James i. 12. Rev. ii. 10.) You must walk in the light, to be children of light; (John xii. 35, 36;) and to have boldness in the day of judgment, you must abide in Christ. (1 John ii. 28.) Deliverance from death, domestic happiness, a knowledge of God's covenant, satisfaction and delight of soul, and the teachings of the Holy Spirit, are all connected with the existence and exercise of God's fear. (Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19. cxxviii. xxxiv. 9, 10. xxv. 12—14.) Exaltation, abundance of grace, and revivals of religion, are promised to the humble. (James iv. 6, 10. Isa. lvii. 15.)

Deadness *to* the world is by the cross of Christ; (Gal. vi. 14;) deliverance *from* the world is by fellowship with the Saviour's death; (Gal. i. 4;) and victory *over* the world

is by faith in Jesus. (1 John v. 4.) To be delivered from trouble, you must call upon God; (Ps. l. 15;) to dwell safely from the fear of evil, you must hearken to the voice of God; (Pro. i. 33;) and to have the desires of your hearts granted, you must delight in God. (Ps. xxxvii. 4.) You must acknowledge God in all your ways, to be directed in all the movements of life; (Prov. iii. 6;) and to quench the fiery darts of the wicked, you must hold up the shield of faith. (Eph. vi. 16.) That you may never see death, you must keep Christ's sayings; (John viii. 51;) and that you may know his doctrine, you must do his will. (John vii. 17.) To be established, you must commit your works to the Lord; (Prov. xvi. 3;) to enjoy God's paternal care and a sense of his love, you must be separate from the world; (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18;) to enter into rest, you must labour; (Heb. iv. 11;) to escape harm, you must follow that which is good; (1 Pet. iii. 13;) and that an abundant entrance may be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you must give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. (2 Pet. i. 10,

11.) To renew your strength, you must wait *upon* God; (Isa. xl. 31;) and to be settled upon the Rock of Ages, you must wait *for* God. (Ps. xl. 1, 2.) To be fruitful, you must meditate day and night in God's law, trust in the Lord, abide in Christ, and diligently cultivate heavenly dispositions. (Ps. i. 2, 3. Jer. xvii. 7, 8. John xv. 4. Tit. iii. 14. 2 Pet. i. 5—8.) Those who seek God early, shall find him; (Prov. viii. 17;) those who confess sin, and forsake it, shall obtain mercy; (Prov. xxviii. 13;) and those who look to Jesus and follow him, shall be enlightened. (Ps. xxxiv. 5. John viii. 12. Ps. cxix. 130.) To be joyful, you must be visited with God's salvation, believe in the Saviour, and understand the truths of the Gospel. (Ps. cvi. 4, 5. 1 Pet. i. 8. John xv. 11.)

Praying in the Holy Ghost is the way to keep the heart in the love of God; (Jude 20, 21;) to seek wisdom as silver, is the way to find the knowledge of the Most High; (Prov. ii. 3—5;) and if self be not denied, you cannot follow Christ. (Matt. xvi. 24.) To be filled and to be satisfied with heavenly blessings, you must open your mouths wide in prayer,

and be obedient to the voice of God. (Ps. lxxxi. 10, 13—16.) The meek will God guide in judgment; (Ps. xxv. 9;) those who speak the truth in love, and desire the sincere milk of the word, shall grow up into Christ in all things; (Eph. iv. 15. 1 Pet. ii. 2;) those who eat Christ shall live for ever; (John vi. 51;) those who love Jerusalem shall prosper; (Ps. cxxii. 6;) those who walk in the Spirit shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; (Gal. v. 16;) and those who live in peace, and call upon God, shall enjoy his presence. (2 Cor. xiii. 11. Ps. cxlv. 18.)

By bearing much fruit, by letting your light shine before men, by offering praise, by dwelling together in unity, you glorify God; (John xv. 8. Matt. v. 16. Ps. l. 23. Rom. xv. 5, 6.) If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; (Rom. viii. 13;) by bearing one another's burdens, you fulfil the law of Christ; (Gal. vi. 2;) by coming to a throne of grace, you will obtain mercy; (Heb. iv. 16;) by remembering God, you will be relieved in trouble; (Ps. lxxvii. 10;) by coming to Christ, you obtain rest to your souls; (Matt. xi. 28;) by making peace,

you sow the fruits of righteousness; (James iii. 18;) and by watchfulness and prayer, temptation is avoided, and the tempter resisted, (Matt. xxvi. 41. James iv. 7.) That you faint not in the hour of trial, you must consider Christ in his sufferings; (Heb. xii. 3;) that you may behold Christ's glory, you must believe his word; (John xi. 40;) that you may stand in the field of battle, you must use the Gospel armour; (Eph. vi. 11, 13;) that you may enjoy Divine support in trouble, you must cast your burdens on the Lord; (Ps. lv. 22;) that you may be rewarded openly, you must pray secretly; (Matt. vi. 6;) to run the race set before you in the Gospel, and so to run as to obtain, you must lay aside every weight, and be temperate in all things. (Heb. xii. 1. 1 Cor. ix. 24—27.) Purity of heart and life is essentially and inseparably connected with the work of the Holy Spirit, with faith in the blood of Christ, with obedience to the Divine will, with the influence of truth, and with a lively hope of glory. (1 Pet. i. 2. Heb. ix. 14. Ps. cxix. 9. 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John iii. 3.)

Those only, who are transformed into the Divine image, prove the Divine will; (Rom.

xii. 2;) those only, who continue in the faith, are presented blameless before God; (Col. i. 22, 23;) and the will of God must be done, before his promise can be received. (Heb. x. 36.) To please God, you must believe, do good, and forget not to communicate. (Heb. xi. 6., xiii. 16.) To pray with success, you must abide in Christ, be fruitful, and agree as to the blessings you seek. (John xv. 7, 16. Matt. xviii. 19.) Quietness and assurance for ever, are the effects of righteousness, and cannot be enjoyed apart from their cause; (Isa. xxxii. 17;) rest is by faith in Christ; (Heb. iv. 3;) and to find pasture, you must enter by the door of the sheepfold. (John x. 9.) In order to reap life everlasting, you must sow, not to the flesh, but to the Spirit; (Gal. vi. 8;) to obtain heavenly wisdom, you must ask of God in faith; (James i. 5;) and to comprehend the love of the Father, you must be rooted in the love of the Saviour. (Eph. iii. 17—19.) If your eye be single, your whole body will be full of light; (Matt. vi. 22;) and if you keep holy the Sabbath-day, you shall delight yourselves in the Lord, and ride upon the high places of the earth. (Isa. lviii. 13, 14.)

Those who observe God's ways, and study his precepts, shall understand his loving-kindness; (Ps. cvii. 43. cxix. 92, 104;) those who water others, shall be watered; (Prov. xi. 25;) and those who walk with wise men, shall be wise. (Prov. xiii. 20.) It is by a soft answer that you must seek to turn away wrath; (Prov. xv. 1;) and by love to the brethren, convince the world that you are the Saviour's disciples. (John xiii. 35.)

To have peace with God, you must be justified by faith; (Rom. v. 1;) to enjoy peace, you must be spiritually minded; (Rom. viii. 6;) to be filled with peace, faith must be in exercise; (Rom. xv. 13;) and to be kept in perfect peace, your minds must be stayed on God. (Isa. xxvi. 3.) "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God:"—*here are the means.* "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus:"—*here is the end.* (Phil. iv. 6, 7.)

Such, my dear friends, is God's prescribed order of conveying blessings to his people,

and these are the means you must employ to obtain them. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ;" (1 Cor. i. 9;) and as he will neither forget nor depart from his arrangements, you may cherish humble confidence towards them, both as it respects the accomplishment of his will, and the prosperity of your souls. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) The means are connected with the end so intimately, that if *they* be disused, *this* cannot be secured; and the end is connected with the means so effectually, that if *these* be properly employed, *that* must be realized. And, surely, the blessings of eternal life are worthy of being sought and obtained by efforts the most arduous! To sinners burthened with guilt, and desirous of pardon; and to believers, concerned for the honour of Divine truth, by endeavouring to preserve spirituality of mind and holiness of life, the promises of the Gospel must be precious. Sincerely to desire grace, is assiduously to seek it where the God of grace assures us it may be found. If the Christian could be saved either with or with-

out repentance, he would yet choose, with his present convictions, to mourn for sin, and to rely on Christ's atonement; and if, after his conversion, he could proceed in the narrow way without prayer, he would prefer leaning on Christ's arm, and receiving his spiritual supplies in the path of obedience, that he might glorify the Saviour by depending on his grace; rather than walk and work independently of his aid. Communion with God is an exercise so delightful in itself, and so salutary in its consequences, that he is thankful, not only for light and life, but for the medium through which they flow; and he discovers the Saviour's love as well in the means he employs to bless his people, as in the blessings he actually bestows upon them. We cannot see how an order of things, opposed to that by which you are governed and instructed, could either glorify God, or benefit you. Holiness and humility are essential to your happiness and usefulness; and whatever, either by positive influence, or relative consequence, diminishes the one, and fosters the other, is a curse, not a blessing.

Let us, then, apply ourselves to the means

which God has introduced, for the elevation of our experience, and the improvement of our practice. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us;" (Heb. xii. 2;) seek information and counsel from the Holy Scriptures; and pursue the chief good under their direction. We are commanded and encouraged to seek large blessings: but if we submit not to God's order of means, we must calculate upon bondage and depression all our days. We do not at present live up to our privileges; nor shall we ever make a holier, a happier, and a more successful use of them, till we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. God has set no limits to our desires or our expectations. On the contrary, he has thrown open to us the provisions of his grace, and invited us to eat and drink abundantly. How is it, then, that we are still poor and wretched? that we scarcely walk, when we ought to run? and complain of sterility and barrenness, when "our waste places ought to be like Eden, and our deserts like the garden of the Lord?" (Isa. li. 3.) If the clouds of his favour rain not, and if the Sun of Righteousness does not

shine, the cause must be with us. Either we do that which is wrong, and thus grieve God's Spirit; or we avoid that which is right, and thus offend his wisdom. We forget his willingness to bless us; and either fail to ask, fearing we shall not receive; or seek, where we cannot find, and remain destitute. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him; but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee." (Ps. lxxxi. 13—16.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE TO WALK IN GOD'S STATUTES.

In all the works of God, both in nature and in grace, a unity of design is perceptible; and the interest he takes in the welfare of his peo-

ple is as apparent in the precepts, as in the promises of the Gospel; in the work of the Spirit on the heart, as in the work of Christ upon the cross. "The new man is created in knowledge, *after the image of him that created him;*" and instead of their being any discrepancy between the principles of a renewed heart, and the practical tendencies of the sacred volume, the most perfect harmony pervades them. That God enjoins obedience is not more manifest, than that the Christian, in a certain state of mind, desires it; and as we are not to be driven from the doctrines of grace by the clamour of foolish men, we are not to be drawn from its precepts by the immorality of wicked men. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," is a Divine injunction; and, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," is the Christian's prayer. The Saviour's yoke is easy, and his burden light; and although thousands regret not bearing it in the days of their youth, none ever complain that they are called to put it on in old age. "the judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much

fine gold; they are sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." (Ps. xix. 10.)

Observe the intensity of feeling with which the writer of the 119th Psalm regarded this subject. "I will keep thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander from thy commandments. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. Blessed art thou, O Lord! teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. I will run the way of thy com-

mandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way."* Bestow a larger measure of thy grace upon me, not only for my own comfort and joy, but that, whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may do all to thy glory; and cheerfully serve thee in newness of life. My own peace of mind is an object of deep solicitude; yet I seek grace for practical purposes, that being transformed into thine image, I may appear before the world and the church in its glory. Let me live, not for my own gratification and ease, but to do thy will. As the great end of life is thy glory, if in any way thou canst employ me to advance it, however earnestly I might desire a removal from earth to heaven, and to whatever toil and suffering obedience may subject me, still let me live, and keep thy word.

* See the whole of the 119th Psalm.

"O that the Lord would guide my ways,
To keep his statutes still!
O that the Lord would grant me grace
To know and do his will!

"O send thy Spirit down, to write
Thy law upon my heart!
Nor let my tongue indulge deceit,
Nor act the liar's part.

"Make me to walk in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road:
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God."

But is this desire for obedience cherished by all Christians at all times? Alas! we fear not. The standard of Christian morals, however, is not lowered by the light and glory of this dispensation; and, as he who is *least* in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, than whom, among the prophets, there was not born a greater, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious;—how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.) But where is the glory of this dispensa-

tion, if Christians, enlightened by its discoveries, enriched by its treasures, and counselled by its precepts, are less devoted to the Lord's service, and, therefore, less consistent in their professions, than were those believers who lived and laboured before the incarnation of the Saviour? As more is revealed to us, than was made known to them, our obligations are proportionably multiplied. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect;" (Heb. xi. 40;) are we to be less spiritually minded than they were? If we fail in obedience, it cannot be either because we are not counselled, or because unreasonable sacrifices are required. Our code of laws is perfect; and their intention is our profit: but if we neglect them in ignorance, or despise them because we conceive they are opposed to our happiness, our obedience must be irregular, and uncertain; and it must rather hinder, than assist, our progress in the Divine life.

Out of what state of soul, then, does a prayerful desire for obedience arise? Not from that which is unhealthy and declining; but out of that which is spiritual and prosper-

ous. Under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, the Christian must exclaim, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes:" and being anxious to attest his love to the Saviour, he can but pray, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word." To be assured, that after death he will serve God day and night in his temple, without weariness or interruption, awakens in his bosom delightful emotions, and sometimes excites intense desires for dissolution; but these prospects, though bright and fair, never induce a neglect of present duty: on the contrary, they quicken his pace on the road of obedience, and render his obligations more touching and powerful. But when he has declined in the life of godliness, ordinary duties are irksome; and a little additional labour is intolerable. What a weariness is it? "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets;" and his tendency is towards a state of declension yet more alarming. One false step, unless retraced, must lead further and further from the right path; and having lost his healthful tone of character, he is as indifferent to his own happiness as to the Saviour's glory.

Let us, my dear friends, seek a prosperous state of soul for the Lord's honour; nor let us be satisfied without it. A drooping, sickly life, is not in character either with our professions or prospects. Is it a matter of no moment, whether we are rising, or sinking, in spirituality of mind? Are the consequences to ourselves, to the church, to the world, and, above all, to God our Saviour, so few and so unimportant, that we need evince no anxiety, or but little, about our actual condition, in the sight of a heart-searching God? Away with such indifference for ever! It is an insult to Christ; and one of the strongest arguments with which infidelity can be furnished. Soul prosperity is of consequence; it ought to be an object of paramount and prayerful solicitude; and whatever is opposed to it must, if possible, be avoided. "I am come," said Jesus, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." (John x. 10.) That ye might have, not a bare subsistence; but, the life which answers to your character, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, and which shall meet the great ends of your adoption into his family:—a life

of influence, and of power; a life of sanctification, of consolation, and of triumph;—and that ye might have this life abundantly. The promised effusions of his Spirit are comparable, not to drops and streams, but to showers and rivers; and which, when communicated, secure a lively and visible exercise of the principles of the new creation. Hope,[1]—consolation,[2]—love,[3]—brotherly-kindness,[4]—faith,[5]—thanksgiving,[6]—joy,[7]—and even labour,[8] will then abound; and while an abundant entrance is ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour,[9] we shall *abundantly* utter the memory of his great goodness, and sing of his righteousness.[10] And is not this state attainable? And are we not to seek it? This was the design of Christ's incarnation, and the intended result of the gift of the Holy Ghost. I am come that they might have life, and more abundantly than others have had it; that they might not measure their desires, nor limit their expectations,

[1] Rom. xv. 13. [2] 2 Cor. i. 5. [3] Phil. i. 9.
[4] 2 Pet. i. 7. [5] Col. ii. 7. [6] Col. ii. 7.
[7] Phil. i. 26. [8] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [9] 2 Pet. i. 11.
[10] Ps. cxlv. 7.

by the dull, lukewarm, low experience of the inconsistent Christian; but that they might seek and obtain large and unprecedented supplies of Divine influence. Nor are we to be satisfied with our attainments, even when God has dealt bountifully with us! but forgetting the things which are behind, we are to press forward, fixing no bounds either to our prayers or our hopes; that instructed and enriched by his Spirit, it may be our meat and our drink to do his will. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John xv. 10.)

CHAPTER VIII.

RULES TO BE OBSERVED FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOUL PROSPERITY.

As there is a manifest connexion between soul prosperity and a right use of the means intended to promote it, we cannot hope to enjoy the former, without throwing into the scale of the latter an effort that will give it a prepon-

derance in our favour. To have life, we must possess Christ, for "He *is* our life." Christ in the Bible, in the memory, in the understanding, only, will not avail for our salvation, without "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory." "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (1 John v. 12.) The religion of the nominal Christian resembles the lifeless scenery of the canvass, where all is still and inanimate. None but the man in whose heart the good seed of the kingdom has been cast, on whom the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, and upon whom the dews of the Holy Spirit rest, can exhibit the moral vitality and beauty of the second creation. To live the life of faith, and to abound in all its holy exercises, we must be united to Christ. And if bodily health be a blessing of such value, that the whole world is a blank without it, how much more valuable is health of soul, without which, we can neither serve God, nor enjoy his presence! Months, and even years, of hard labour and distress may be required to regain that spiritual vigour, of which the inconsistency of *a moment* may deprive us. The Spirit of God is a holy and

a tender Spirit; as susceptible of our indifference to spiritual prosperity, as he is concerned for the Saviour's glory; and unless we husband his influences, value his donations, and practically fall in with his designs, we grieve him, and cause his departure.

To grow in grace, and to abound in the fruits of righteousness, we must live by rule. An occasional concern for the stability of Christ's kingdom in our hearts, will not meet the pressing necessities of our case; and a departure from the spirit, as well as from the letter of Christ's laws, will issue in distress. If a man, without any regard to the calls of duty, rush into the ward of an hospital, where a virulent fever reigns, he cannot expect to escape contagion; and if a Christian cherish familiar intercourse with the gay and irreligious, the consequences to his religion must be awfully alarming. We must not conceive that, because God has promised to perfect his work in the souls of his people, we are to be heedless of our temper and conduct; nor take it for granted that the work *is* advancing. We ought rather to test our professed reception of life, by its positive progressions. The

evidences of our conversion, however numerous, may all, and in a short time, too, be obscured by *inconsistency* of conduct. We must, at all hazards, walk humbly with God, and follow Christ's example.

"Two or three plain rules, I find," said the excellent Dr. Payson, "of wonderful service in deciding all difficult cases. One is, to do nothing of which I doubt in any degree the lawfulness; the second, to consider every thing as unlawful which indisposes me for prayer, and interrupts communion with God; and the third is, never to go into any company, business, or situation, in which I cannot conscientiously ask and expect the Divine presence. By the help of these rules, I settle all my doubts in a trice; and find that many things I have hitherto indulged in, are, if not utterly unlawful, at least inexpedient, and I can renounce them without many sighs." In alluding to an attempt to have Zech. xiv. 20, fulfilled in his house, he says, "Though we succeed miserably enough, yet the bare attempt has given us a happiness unknown before. One thing which has been greatly blessed to us, is having family prayer *at noon*, as well as

morning and evening. It shows us how far we get from God, during the day, even when we begin and close it with him. In some families this would be impossible, and then half an hour spent alone would answer the purpose as well. I find it requires almost constant rubbing and chafing, to make the blood circulate in such frozen souls as ours; and, after all, it avails nothing, if the Sun of Righteousness does not shine."

But how did this blessed man die? As it might be expected he would, in the full assurance of faith. Oh, let us aim to live his life, that our last end may be like his! "The celestial city," he said, a short time before his departure, "is full in my view: its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me; its sounds strike upon my ears; and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the

whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm! A single heart, and a single tongue, seem altogether inadequate to my wants; I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.

"Oh, what a blessed thing it is to lose one's will! Since I have lost my will, I have found happiness. There can be no such thing as disappointment to me, for I have no desires but that God's will may be accomplished. God has kept cutting off one source of enjoyment after another, till I find that I can do without them all, and enjoy more happiness than ever in my life before. Christians might avoid much trouble and inconvenience, if they would only believe what they profess—that God is able to make them happy without any thing else. They imagine that if such a dear friend were to die, or such and such blessings to be removed, they should be miserable; whereas

God can make them a thousand times happier without them. To mention my own case, God has been depriving me of one blessing after another, but as every one was removed, he has come in and filled up its place; and now when I am a cripple, and not able to move, I am happier than ever I was in my life before, or ever expected to be; and if I had believed this twenty years ago, I might have been spared much anxiety. If God had told me some time ago, that he was about to make me as happy as I could be in this world, and then had told me that he should begin by crippling me in all my limbs, and removing me from all my usual sources of enjoyment, I should have thought it a very strange mode of accomplishing his purpose. And yet how is his wisdom manifest even in this!

"Suppose a son is walking with his father, in whose wisdom he places the most entire confidence; he follows wherever his father leads, though it may be through thorns and briers, cheerfully and contentedly. Another son, we will suppose, distrusts his father's wisdom and love, and when the path is rough and uneven, begins to murmur and repine,

wishing he might be allowed to choose his own path, and though he is obliged to follow, it is with great reluctance and discontent. Now the reason that Christians in general do not enjoy more of God's presence is, that they are not willing to walk in his path when it crosses their own inclinations. But we shall never be happy, until we acquiesce, with perfect cheerfulness, in all his decisions, and follow wherever he leads without a murmur."

And yet this great and holy man renounces, as all who are taught of God will do, his own doings, and cleaves to Christ alone; ascribing all success to the unmerited and sovereign grace of God. "I find," he says, "no satisfaction in looking at any thing I have done; I want to leave all this behind, it is nothing, and fly to Christ to be clothed in his righteousness." Again: "I have done nothing myself. I have not fought, but Christ has fought for me; I have not run, but Christ has carried me; I have not worked, but Christ has wrought in me; Christ has done all."

Observe, too, the following rules for a holy life, laid down by that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, Archbishop Leighton. "Thou

must submit and give up thyself to the discipline of Jesus; and become his scholar, resigning and impelling thyself altogether to obey him in all things; so that thy willing and nilling thou utterly and perfectly do cast away from thee, and do nothing without his license. At every word thou wilt speak, at every morsel thou wilt eat, at every stirring or moving of every article or member of thy body, thou must ask leave of him in thy heart, and ask thyself whether, having so done, that be according to his holy will and example, and with a sincere attention to his glory. Offer all thou hast, to be nothing, to use nothing of all thou hast about thee, and is called thine, but to his honour and glory. And resolve, through his grace, to use all the powers of thy soul, and every member of thy body, to his service, as formerly thou hast done to sin. If thou wouldest ascend and come up to thy Lord God, thou must climb up by the wounds of his blessed humanity, that remain, as it were, for that use; and when thou art got up there, thou wouldest rather suffer death than commit any sin.

"Cast all thy care on God, and commit all

to his good pleasure; laud, and praise, and applaud him in all things, small and great; forsake thy own will, and deliver up thyself freely and cheerfully to the will of God, without reserve or exception, in prosperity and adversity, sweet or sour, to have or to want, to live or to die. But whatsoever thou perceivest to appertain to the honour of thy Lord, be it ever so hard and unpleasant to thyself, thou wilt heartily embrace it, yea, with all thy might follow and desire it; yet when thou hast done what is possible for thee, thou wilt think thou hast done nothing at all; yea, thou shalt be ashamed, and detest thyself, that thou hast so wretchedly and imperfectly served so noble and worthy a Lord; and, therefore, thou wilt desire and endeavour to do and suffer greater and more perfect things than hitherto thou hast done, forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward."

Attend, also, to your moral diet. Eat the bread of life; it was provided for you by Infinite Wisdom; it is to be your daily food; and, when eaten by faith, it will make you strong and vigorous. "Whoso eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (John vi. 51.) He shall

not, as a natural man, dream of spiritual life; but, as a renewed man, he shall enjoy it. Beware of false doctrine. "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker;" (2 Tim. ii. 16, 17;) but incline your ear unto the sayings of Christ and his apostles, "for they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (Prov. iv. 22.) Shun error as poison, but value truth as gold.

Let the atmosphere in which you live be as pure as possible. Without holiness you can neither see the Lord in the life to come, nor enjoy his presence in this. Beware, therefore, of being drawn into an unholy element. Wherever Christian duty calls you, go; but if you wander from God's statutes, you cannot expect his protection. Where you and the precept part, there you and the promise must part; for if you forsake the one, you will be forsaken by the other. Physical strength is often prostrated by a disease to which the system is predisposed; and as you are naturally inclined to evil, if you voluntarily ex-

pose yourself to it, you will, in all probability, fall by its influence.

The Christian is often led by Divine Providence where, if he were allowed to choose his own path, he would not go; but if he imbibe the Spirit of Christ, and thus arm himself against the insidious attacks of his adversary, he may go into any atmosphere, into which God calls him, with a scriptural hope of leaving it uninjured. More depends as to our safety, in trying times, upon the actual state of our affections, than upon external circumstances. For example:—two shrubs are placed in the same soil; and, under the same culture, one flourishes, and the other withers: and so one Christian, though surrounded by temptations, and placed beyond the reach of ministerial discipline and fraternal counsel, will be strong and vigorous; while another, sheltered from storm, and placed where associations of thought and action are calculated to promote his growth, languishes and declines. How important, then, is health of soul!

Let your companions be few and select. "Evil communications corrupt good man-

ners." (1 Cor. xv. 33.) "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Prov. xiii. 20.) "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." (Prov. xii. 24, 25.) "I am," said David, "a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." (Ps. cxix. 63.) "Can a man walk on pitch, and his feet be not defiled? Can a man take coals of fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?" "If he can," says Dr. Payson, "he may then mix freely with the world, and not be contaminated. But I am not the one who can do this. I cannot think it proper or expedient for a Christian to go into any company, unless necessity calls, where he may, perhaps, hear the name he loves and reverences blasphemed, or at least, profaned! where that book, which he esteems the word of God, will, if mentioned, be alluded to only to awaken laughter, or 'adorn a tale;'—where the laws of good breeding are almost the only laws which may not be broken with impunity; and where every thing he hears or sees has a

strong tendency to extinguish the glow of devotion, and entirely banish seriousness. I speak only for myself: others may experience no bad effects; but, for myself, when I go into company, if it is pleasant and agreeable, it has a tendency only to fix my thoughts on earth, from which it is my duty and my desire to turn them;—to give me a distaste for serious duties, especially prayer and meditation, and to render me desirous of the applause and approbation of those with whom I associate."

Let your spiritual exercises be regular and habitual. Our limbs, our muscles, and our minds, improve by exercise; and exertion is as good for the soul as for the body. "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit;" (Rom. viii. 5;) and as Timotheus naturally cared for the prosperity of the Philippians, so, if grace thrive, you will habitually pray, repent, and believe. We eat and drink by habit, to sustain animal life; and, when in health, we do not enjoy our food the less, because we take it at a fixed hour in the day. And why should not those religious habits, by which spiritual life is preserved, be

uniform and established? David speaks of calling upon God seven times a day; and why should not we do this? Formality is to be avoided; but it does not follow that we must be insincere and heartless, because we are regular, in our exercises. The grace of God is sufficient for all things; and under its discipline and influence we may come as hungry and as thirsty seven times a day to the throne of mercy, as if we came but once. Yea, the probability is, that the oftener we come, the oftener we shall desire to come; and the graces of the Spirit will not only be strengthened by a fixed measure of exercise, but inclined to more exercise, in this exact proportion. We drink the water of life to be refreshed, and our thirst is increased by the very means we use to allay it. We thirst, and drink; we drink, and thirst again; and the water that Christ gives us, is promised to be within us a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. (John iv. 14.)

Deal much, and frequently, by faith, with the blood of sprinkling; for without this, there can be neither purity nor health. Whatever be the state of your minds, though happy, and

even triumphant, you will need the blood of Jesus to cleanse your holy things: nor can you enjoy peace for one moment without a reference to it. Could you live far more consistently than the most devoted saint upon earth ever did, even *then* you would have to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke xviii. 13.) Beware of forgetting "the Lamb that was slain;" and guard against the subtle devices of the devil, who, in the hour of prosperity, would persuade you that you are so purified from outward pollution, and have attained to such a degree of internal sanctification, that it is not expected you should wash in the blood of Christ so frequently as you have done. These suggestions often entangle the man of God when he first enters the liberty of the Gospel; and to the day of his death he is more or less liable to suffer from them. Lie low, then, at Immanuel's feet in self-renunciation; and ever come, as poor, polluted sinners, to the fountain he has opened for sin and uncleanness. With whatever truth of the Holy Scriptures, or with whatever state of heart the blood of Christ is connected, with that truth you can have no fellowship, that state of heart you can-

not possess, without making use of the blood of Christ. By this blood we live,[1] and have peace with God.[2] It is the price of our redemption,[3] and our shield in battle.[4] By it we are pardoned,[5] justified,[6] sanctified,[7] and consecrated to the Lord's service.[8] It is the blood of the everlasting covenant,[9] the blood of sprinkling,[10] and it is precious blood.[11] It was shed for sinners;[12] by it we are delivered from the pit wherein is no water;[13] we are brought nigh to God by it;[14] it speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;[15] with it, at the Lord's Supper, we have communion;[16] and by it we enter into the holiest of all.[17] By faith it purifies the heart,[18] and saves the soul.[19]

Wherefore, my dear friends, make daily use of the blood of Jesus for life and liberty; for rest and victory. If you approach God in prayer; if you devote yourselves to his ser-

1 John vi. 54. 2 Col. i. 20. 3 Rev. v. 9.
4 Rev. xii. 11. 5 Eph. i. 7. 6 Rom. v. 9.
7 Heb. x. 10. 8 Heb. ix. 14. 9 Heb. xiii. 20.
10 Heb. xii. 24. 11 1 Pet. i. 19, 20. 12 Matt. xxvi. 28.
13 Zech. ix. 11. 14 Eph. ii. 13. 15 Heb. xii. 24.
16 1 Cor. x. 16. 17 Heb. x. 19. 18 Acts xv. 9.
19 Mark xvi. 16.

vice; if you attempt to oppose the world, the flesh, and the devil;—all this can be done only by faith in the blood of Christ. Your tears and your praises, being imperfect, must be purified before they can be acceptable to the Lord; and whether you discharge a duty, or use a privilege, you must, to please God, come by faith to the blood of sprinkling. As guilty sinners, you must go to the cross for pardon; from the cross to the mercy-seat for orders; from thence to the field of labour; and from the field of labour to the cross again. You cannot go to Jesus too frequently, nor rely on his atonement too confidently.

Lastly, regard your best interests, and the prosperity of the soul, in all the movements and arrangements of life. In business, in social intercourse, in marriage, in recreation, let the care of the soul be the one thing needful; and your advancement in experimental and practical religion, the great object to which all your occupations and pursuits ought to be subservient. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33.) "If

ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John xiii. 17.)

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN, BY ABIDING IN CHRIST, IS SUPPLIED WITH INFLUENCE AND STRENGTH FOR THE DISCHARGE OF HIS OBLIGATIONS.

"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) Here is the standard of Christian obligation, and here the source of power for its discharge. You are to follow Christ's example; and by abiding in him, your conformity to his image will be secured. To follow the excellent of the earth, so far as they followed Christ, is your duty; but you must seek to imbibe the spirit, and to exhibit the moral excellencies of their Master. To this you were predestinated, (Rom. viii. 29,) for this you were regenerated, (1 Pet. ii. 9,) and this is the natural effect of fellowship with God. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) You are to imitate his seriousness, his zeal, his benevolence, his patience, his confidence in his Father's love, and his

obedience to his Father's will; and your obligations thus to walk, even as he walked, arise out of positive command, out of love to his person, out of gratitude for his grace, and out of your adoption into his family. Some persons, who have no scriptural knowledge of the truth, and who are in him only by an outward profession, say they abide in him; and many timid minds, though they cleave to him in love, are afraid to say they abide in him. But to walk as Christ walked, is obviously the duty and privilege of his people, and the evidence of their conversion. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him." (1 John ii. 4, 5.)

The following propositions, if prayerfully considered, will assist our inquiries on the important subject of this chapter.

1. *The Christian, in himself, is helpless, and insufficient for the work to which he is called by the Gospel.* This we learn from the promises of God; and its truth is confirmed by the experience of every day. "Work

out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) "Now the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." (Heb. xiii. 21.) "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.)

Now, if we could walk without Divine guidance, and work without Divine assistance, why has God promised to lead and strengthen us? The provisions of the covenant are designed to meet our condition; and we must judge of our necessities, not only by feeling and by circumstances, but by promises. The agency of the Holy Spirit is not more essential to our conversion, than to our obedience,

by which that conversion is tested. If we have nothing more than natural understanding, or natural strength, to assist us, we cannot do the work of the Lord. So depraved are we, that, when left to ourselves, we think of the evil, and forget the good; or reject the good, and embrace the evil. The dead in sin are not more dependent on God, for the communication of spiritual life, than are those whom he has quickened, for grace to enable them to live and act in character with their professions. An unconverted man may discharge natural and moral duties; but, *as* an ungodly man, he cannot discharge spiritual duties. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" (Isa. lvii. 20;) and as in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, his works cannot be good. Many of his deeds are, doubtless, honourable to himself and beneficial to his fellow-creatures: but, as without faith it is impossible to please God, however rich be his offerings, and splendid his achievements, the motive corrupts the deed; and, in the sight of God, the fruit he bears is obnoxious. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me,

draw him;" (John vi. 44;) and we are as much indebted to alluring grace for every step we take, in the path of life, after conversion, as we are to renewing grace for ever having awakened our attention to spiritual blessings, before conversion. God does not bestow upon his people, when he regenerates them, a certain measure of grace, to carry them through their toils safe to glory; nor are they ever thrown upon their own resources: moment by moment, step by step, must they lean on their Beloved, who will have the glory, not only of their redemption, but also of their obedience. Without his aid they cannot discharge a duty, obtain a blessing, or gain a single conquest over the weakest enemy that assails them. "Without me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) No, "you cannot shed a penitential tear, nor offer an acceptable prayer, nor think a holy thought, nor feel the power of a single promise, without me." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John xv. 4.) "I am the root of David," and "from me is thy fruit found." (Rev. xxii. 16. Hos. xiv. 8.)

But whence arises our inability for our work? Not from the want of physical power; nor from ignorance of the Divine will; nor from a paucity of means:—but from the influence of Satan, from the depravity and pride of the heart, from the perverseness of our wills, and from the activity and vigour of indwelling sin. If we pray, repent, believe, or hope, we do it by the Holy Spirit's assistance. God forbid, then, that we should ever attempt to do what he requires at our hands, in our own strength. "If," as Dr. Owen remarks, "a branch be so separated from the root and body of the vine, as that it receives not continual supplies of nourishment from them, if their influence into it be by any means intercepted, it proceeds not in its growth, it brings forth no fruit; but is immediately under decay. It is so, saith our Saviour, with believers in respect unto him. Unless they have continual, uninterrupted influences of grace, and spiritually-vital nourishment from him, they can do nothing; that is, by their own power, or by virtue of any habit or principle of grace they have received, they can do nothing; that is, which appertains to fruit-bearing unto God.

In things natural and civil we can do somewhat, and in things sinful, too much; we need no assistance for any such purpose. But in fruit-bearing unto God, we can do nothing. Now every act of faith and love, every motion of our minds and affections towards God, is a part of our fruit-bearing, and so unquestionably are all external works and duties of holiness. Wherefore, our Saviour himself being judge, believers who are really sanctified and made partakers of habitual grace, yet cannot of themselves, without new actual aid and assistance of grace from him, do any thing that is spiritually good, or acceptable with God."

2. *The Christian requires both influence and strength for the walk he is directed to take.*

He requires *influence*. "The ways of Wisdom are pleasantness, her paths are peace," (Pr. iii. 17,) "and in keeping her commandments there is great reward." (Ps. xix. 11.) But the Christian is often indisposed to follow her directions, even though he knows that they will guide him to liberty and rest. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;"

(Matt. xxvi. 41;) and yet, by the influence of the flesh, the spirit herself is sometimes unwilling. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me, according to thy word." (Ps. cxix. 25.) Oh! the dulness, the stupidity of our hearts!

> "Hardly sure can they be worse,
> Who have never heard his name!"

We are our own enemies, and our slothfulness nearly proves our ruin.* Upon the ocean of life, we may be compared to a vessel whose sails are furled; in the garden of the Lord, we resemble plants that lack moisture; and in the temple of the Redeemer, we are like lamps without a sufficient supply of oil. Well might David pray, "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake;" and "incline mine heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness." We have often, to our shame be the confession, no inclination, or but little, for prayer, for reading the Scriptures, for hearing the Gospel, and for fellowship with

* The reader is requested to examine the following passages:—Pr. xviii. 9 : xx. 4, 13 : xxi. 25 : xxiv. 30—34: xxvi. 14, 16.

the faithful! Duty is a task, privilege a toil. Instead of flying to meet the Saviour, when he goes forth to bless his people, we cry with the sluggard, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding the hands to sleep;" and suffer hours and days to pass without evincing much anxiety to enjoy his presence. And even when he condescends to knock at our door, saying, "Open to me, and I will come in, and sup with you, and you with me," we exclaim, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Religion having declined in its life and power, devotion languishes in its zeal and spirituality. To visit the sick, to relieve the destitute, to instruct the ignorant, to warn the careless, is now burthensome; and we suffer a thousand opportunities of doing good to pass, without attempting to improve them. We are deaf to the calls of the Spirit, and blind to the beauties of the Saviour; or if we occasionally see the one, and hear the other, we yet remain unmoved, and therefore lie unblessed. And what is still more affecting, our lamentations for these infirmities are only formally ex-

pressed, because our guilt is not deeply felt. The Saviour's love is forgotten; his authority is disregarded; the law does not alarm us; the Gospel does not allure us, neither do the most affecting providences instruct us. A nation may be in tears, but we weep not; the church may either agonize in distress, or triumph in joy, but we have no sympathy with her sorrows or her praises. We lose the love of our espousals, cast off our first works; and, from being the devoted disciples of Jesus, become the careless professors of his truth. Mournful state! and without staying to inquire either into its cause or its consequences, we may observe, in passing, how strikingly it proves the necessity of Divine influence. Yes, indeed—for no man can quicken his own soul when dead, preserve it when alive, or restore it when declining. The excitements of public ordinances and the influence of passing events, though teeming with interest, are insufficient to move our sluggish spirits, or to warm our cold affections; and even past experience, or a sense of obligation, will not call forth the energy required for an obedient life. *No-*

thing less than the power of God can do this.

But we require *strength*, as well as influence. To be excited to a spiritual exercise, in which God had not promised to assist us, would issue in a reaction the most distressing; and instead of being advanced in our course, we should be retarded. Power, as well as motive, is required to carry us through our work; for so difficult is our course, we can scarcely make our way. It is not an easy thing to hold fast confidence in God at all times, and under all circumstances; and our difficulties increase with our progress. Becoming more acquainted with our own hearts, discovering more of the mind and will of God, and being more exposed to the influence of Satan and the world, instead of its being easier to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in their season, it becomes increasingly arduous. To profess the truth, and to follow the example of the nominal Christian, or even of the true Christian, when he declines in spirituality, is easy. But to believe, to walk, to fight—this is hard indeed! In fact, it is impossible with-

out the assistance of the Almighty. Some parts of our duty are easier than others; but who can balance the higher and weightier scales of Christian morals, unless poised and sustained by an Omnipotent arm? "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt. v. 38—44.) "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. xii. 19—21.)

But is all this easy? Is it not, rather, exceedingly difficult? "Revenge," says the

natural heart, "is sweet; and the law of retaliation just; but who can be expected to love an enemy, and to bless a persecutor? An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, involves a principle we can understand, and are willing to regard; but, to follow Christ's example, 'who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;'—(1 Pet. ii. 23;) this is hard indeed!" And yet, in such a case, nothing less than this is obedience to the laws of Christ. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but, contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Pet. iii. 9.) "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee." (Pr. xx. 22.) And if, by a change of circumstances, you rise, and your enemy should fall, and you have an opportunity of resenting his past unkindness, you must, even then, bless, and not curse. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him." (Pr. xxiv. 17.) Rather let us imbibe David's spirit, who wept at the distress of his foe, and behaved

himself as though he had been his friend and brother. (Psalm xxxv. 11—14.)

This humiliating submission to those who inflict injury, when the injured have an opportunity of retaliating, though honourable, is difficult; and the world will even scorn an individual for meekly bearing the insults of another. Yet all this is Christian duty. But, as we have no strength for the toils and sacrifices it involves, if destitute of that moral courage which can flow only from God, we shall transgress his commandments, and by this act of rebellion inflict positive injury upon ourselves.

3. *We must not, however, neglect duty because of its difficulties; for strength and wisdom are both promised.*

The Lord gives grace in season; and the supplies of his Spirit are adapted to that amount of labour which we are called to render. It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to draw the line of distinction between human volition and Divine influence with such exactness, as to mark, with unerring precision, the point upon which turn all successful efforts to do the will of God; yet the fact of our working

by his assistance is clearly stated in Scripture, and is apparent to our own minds.

That the necessity and glory of Divine influence may be neither forgotten nor obscured, I must remind you of the position we have already taken; *that God only can incline the heart to duty, and that we are as much indebted to his Spirit for a holy thought, as for "the Divine nature."* But you must remember, also, that though you work by God's assistance, and though he must have all the glory of your obedience, the work is yours, not his. Christ died for the offences of his people, and rose again for their justification; but he does not repent and believe for them. He, doubtless, works the principle of faith and godly sorrow within them, and bestows the grace of these habits upon them; nor can they repent and believe without his aid; still, the act of repenting and believing is theirs. As creatures, we live, and move, and have our being in God; nor can we put forth any physical power without his aid; but it is the man who walks and works, assisted by his Creator. And does not God afford the Christian strength for the ordinary duties of

his calling? And in discharging them, does he not receive power proportioned to their difficulty? If called, by Divine Providence, to undertake a journey of any considerable length, am I to sit down at my ease, and then expect that God will, in some miraculous way, carry me forward? This would be the height of folly. No—I must walk by God's assistance; and not expect his aid if I refuse to walk. Just so, or nearly so, it is with spiritual exercises. I have no power in myself to pray, or to believe, or to repent; and am quite inadequate to the task, which even these pages impose. May I then, on the ground of personal inability to do what God requires, become slothful and indifferent? Certainly not; my course is plain, because my duty is obvious. Weak as I am, and though, without Christ, I can do nothing, I must yet attempt to accomplish his pleasure, believing that he will afford his promised aid, and lead me on to his own glory. "My strength," he says, "is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

How often have we gone to the throne of grace, neither disposed nor prepared to pray; yet, in opening our mouths before the Lord,

he has filled them with arguments, and enabled us both to wrestle and prevail with the Angel of the Covenant. His assurance is, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." He does not give us grace one week for the necessities of another, nor dying faith for living moments; but day by day, and hour by hour, he supplies us with the needful influences of his Spirit. We have frequently been brought through a trial, in comfort and in peace, which, in the distant prospect, nearly overwhelmed us: we have said, "'tis impossible for me, a poor frail sinful creature, to live in that storm, and to bear up under the mighty out-breakings of that calamity; and yet, when brought into the difficulty, we were mercifully upheld, and borne through without injury. We have proved the power and importance of truth, at the precise moment when its influence was needed; and after all our past experience of God's mercy, shall we doubt his intention to assist us, when, by the *calls of his Providence and the monitions of his Spirit*, we are urged to enterprises apparently the most hazardous and difficult? If we move a step, or devise a plan, independently of his power

and counsel, we may expect failure and disappointment, and if we neglect duty on the ground of personal insufficiency for its discharge, we despise both the precepts and the promises of his love; but if we attempt his work, relying on his Spirit, he will crown our efforts with success. Weakness is no excuse for negligence. We are, indeed, limited both in our powers of body and of mind; but we have not yet reached our limitation. "We have left undone the things which we ought to have done;" and with all our grief for past omissions, and our professed desires for improvement, here we are, still in a low condition as to our experience and practice; and with scarcely an effort to rise. Oh! when shall we learn wisdom! When shall it be said of us, "They labour to enter into rest, they follow hard after God, and they agonize in prayerful exertions to do his will!"

4. Now, observe, *Christ becomes both influence and strength to those who are united to him.*

The union of Christ and his church is a purifying and an establishing truth; and one which, when received in the love of it, will

conform us to his image. "If a man would know whether he be in Christ or not, he must look within, and ask his own heart, what is there? Hath the Holy Spirit been there? Is there any thing above nature wrought? Are there any features of the Divine image? What is there of humility, zeal, and holy love? What of purity, mercy, or obedience? See how it is within. If a mere *vacuum* be there, if the heart be void of these graces, it is a vain presumption to think that he is in union with Christ. That there should be humility in the Head, and pride in the members; zeal and love in the Head, and coldness and hatred in the members; purity, mercy, and obedience in the Head, and uncleanness, cruelty, and rebellion in the members, is a thing too absurd to be imagined by any considering man."*

This union is a truth full of consolation to the sorrowful, and replete with power to the helpless. It is compared to the union of the vine and the branches; (John xv. 1, 5;) of the foundation and the building; (Eph. ii. 20;) of the husband and the wife; (Eph. v. 31, 32;)

* Christus in Corde.

of the king and his subjects; (Rev. xvii. 14;) of the Father and the Son; (John xvii. 21;) and of the body and the head. (Col. ii. 19.) And besides the legal union, which secures to his people the benefits of his death, there is a vital, an actual union between them, by virtue of which they receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace; and become savingly acquainted with his power, wisdom, and love. "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii. 11.) "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature:* old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) This union is effected by the Holy Ghost, in the great work of regeneration; it is the foundation of communion with the Father; and the cause of our actual fellowship with the personal and official grace of the Son. It is not an accidental union, where both parties preserve their independence; but a vital and an influential one. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it; even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his

body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. v. 29, 30.)

This union, though mysterious, is perfectly obvious to faith; for it is that connexion between Christ and the soul which supplies it with all its gifts, graces, consolations, and enjoyments; and secures to *him* the glory of its life, of its health, and even of its exertions. We live, for he is our life; we see, for he is our light; and he becomes not only our righteousness, but our wisdom and sanctification. His work of grace in the heart is perfectly distinct from his work upon the cross; and we must actually be in union with him, to receive the blessings resulting from his atonement. His holiness does not supersede ours; but renders it necessary for our peace in this world, and for our salvation in another. Sanctification is as positively imparted and inwrought, as righteousness is imputed and embraced. Our life answers to Christ's life; and there must be a resemblance between the head and the members. The grace imparted to the church, flows from the measureless grace in the Saviour; and from his fulness we receive even the Holy Ghost with all his

plentitude of love, and sufficiency of influence. The oil on Aaron's head ran down to the skirts of his garment; and Jesus was anointed with "the oil of gladness above his fellows," that they might receive "an unction from the Holy One." (1 John ii. 20.) The humanity of the Son was sustained and carried through its work of suffering by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; and the same Spirit that dwells in him, dwells in his people. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) From him the head, the whole body is supplied with nourishment; (Col. ii. 19;) and as each member is influenced to discharge its proper functions, the whole, being knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. (Eph. iv. 16.)

Christ is not only the example of all holy living, but the fountain of all holy influence; and, as the work of the Holy Ghost is the result of his universal headship, by his life-inspiring and sin-dethroning power, his people are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, and to abound in every good work. Some services are not acceptable to God; and it does not follow that because a man pleases

himself, he must please God; on the contrary, as motive and principle are his standard of judgment, many a costly offering is offensive in his sight.* "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. vii. 4.) The design of union to Christ is, therefore, fruitfulness towards God; and by the resources to which this union introduces us, we are prepared for "the work of faith, and the labour of love."

"Nothing is duty," says Dr. Owen, "nothing is obedience in believers, but what is grace from Christ communicated unto them. The preparation of all fructifying grace, is in Christ, as the fruit of the branches is naturally in the vine. And the Lord Christ doth spiritually and voluntarily communicate this grace unto all believers, as the vine communicates its juice unto the branches naturally; and it is in the new nature of believers to derive it from him by faith. This being done, it is in them

* Is. i. 11, 15. Amos v. 21. Rom. viii. 8.; xiv. 23. Heb. xi. 6.

turned into particular duties of holiness and obedience. Therefore it is evident that there is nothing of evangelical holiness in any one person whatever, but what is derived immediately from Jesus Christ, by virtue of relation unto him, and union with him. The spiritual life which I have, is not mine own, not from myself was it educed, not by myself is it maintained; but it is merely and solely the work of Christ; so that it is not I that live, but he that lives in me, the whole of my life being from him alone. Neither doth this living head communicate only a bare life unto believers, that they should merely live and no more, a poor, weak, dying life, as it were; but he gives out sufficiently to afford them a strong, vigorous, thriving, flourishing life. His treasures of grace are unsearchable, his stores inexhaustible. His life, the fountain of ours, full and eternal; his heart bounteous and large; his hand open and liberal; so that there is no doubt but that he communicates supplies of grace for their increase in holiness abundantly unto all his saints. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body, is not for the want of his communication of

grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Hence it is that where lust grows strong, a great deal of grace will but keep the soul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulness at all. Oftentimes Christ gives very much grace, where not many of its effects do appear. How sound, healthy, and flourishing; how fruitful and exemplary in holiness, might many a soul be, by and with that grace which is continually communicated to it from Christ, which now, by reason of the power of indwelling sin, is not only dead, but weak, withering, and useless."*

5. As Christ is both the head of influence, and a never-failing source of strength to his people, I want you now to feel, *that by his Almighty assistance you can walk and work, not only successfully, but with comfort to yourselves.* "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.) You can do nothing without God, but every thing, that he requires, by his

* Dr. Owen v. 13, 163; iii. 66.

assistance. You have no resources in yourselves, as sinners; and as believers, you employ the grace of the covenant as fast as you receive it. You have no stock in hand, no store out of Christ; and by union to him you are brought into a state of absolute dependence upon him. But, encouraging thought! "My grace," he says, "is sufficient for thee:" (2 Cor. xii. 9;) and strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man, you can maintain Christian consistency.

Your resources, *are the resources of Deity.* I am thy God, thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. God, in the person and work of his Son, hath entered into covenant with you; and every moral and natural perfection of his nature is brought to bear upon your safety and comfort. You have God for your guide, guard, and portion; and by virtue of union to Christ, you have an interest in all that belongs to the Father. The infinite, the boundless treasures of his grace are all thrown open; and, having access to them by faith, you may draw from them whatever you need; and you may do this at all times, and in all places. However impoverished and wretched you may

be, and whatever be the number or character of your trials and temptations, there is enough in God to replenish and to satisfy you. All things are possible with God, and what cannot you do in the strength of God? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? And is any duty too difficult for those to whom the Lord imparts his own strength? If you are straitened, it is not in him, but in yourselves; (2 Cor. vi. 12;) and as martyrs have been borne through their sufferings in triumph, may you not hope to be carried through your work in peace? From what duty will you dare to shrink, with Jehovah on your side! "I made haste," said David, "and delayed not to keep thy statutes;" and why should you not emulate his zeal? He had to contend with your difficulties; and you are sustained by his consolations. But your resources are, also,

Those of incarnate Deity. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" for the use of his people. (Col. i. 19.) He is the trustee of the covenant; in his hands are placed all the blessings of that covenant, that he might distribute them with wise and munificent liberality, to enrich and to strengthen

the souls of men. The grace that dwells in him is personal; constituting his own glory and excellency; (Ps. xlv. 1—3;) and it is relative;—fitting him for the discharge of his mediatorial undertakings, and investing him with official authority to bless the poor and needy who flee to him for succour. He has grace to meet your condition in the eye of the law; pardoning your guilt, justifying you from all things, and rendering both your persons and services acceptable to the Father. He has grace to meet your actual condition; life for your death, light for your darkness, wisdom for your folly, strength for your weakness, and holiness for your impurity. Grace to meet your known and felt condition; healing your wounds, relieving your sorrows, and raising you to a holy assurance of interest in his Father's love. Grace to meet your circumstantial condition; he is your deliverer, your guide, your refuge, your advocate. Grace to meet your relative condition; are you soldiers? he clothes you in armour; pilgrims? he puts the staff of promise in your hands; mariners? his word is your compass, hope your anchor, prayer your sail, the Spirit your breeze. And

in him there is a *fulness* of this grace; and this fulness is overflowing, and infinite. In him there are depths of wisdom, love, and truth; yet all these blessings are yours; and it is your privilege to make daily use of them for your strength in duty. God is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; and the glory given to Christ by the Father, is, by the Son, given to the Father's chosen, for their comfort in sorrow, and for their cheerful perseverance in the paths of obedience. "And on this ground it is," observes Dr. Owen, "that if all the world should draw from one single promise, an angel standing by, and crying, Drink, O my friends, yea, drink abundantly, take so much grace and pardon as shall be abundantly sufficient for the world of sin which is in every one of you; they would not be able to sink the grace of the promise one hair's breadth. There is enough for millions of worlds if they were, because it flows into it from an infinite bottomless fountain. 'Fear not, O worm Jacob, I am God, and not man,' is the bottom of a sinner's consolation. This is that head of gold mentioned; (Cant. v. 11;) that most precious fountain of grace and mercy. This infinite-

ness of grace in respect of its spring and fountain, will answer all objections that might hinder our souls from drawing nigh to communion with him, and from a free embracing of him. Will not this suit us in all our distresses? What is our finite guilt before it? Show me the sinner that can spread his iniquities to the dimensions (if I may so say) of this grace. Here is grace enough for the greatest, the oldest, the stubbornest transgressor. 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Take heed of them who would rob you of the Deity of Christ; if there were no more grace for me than what can be treasured up in a mere man, I should rejoice my portion might be under rocks and mountains."*

But your resources are, also, *those of indwelling Deity.* The Holy Spirit is a person in the Godhead, and he dwells in his people for ever; and while the manifestations of his love delight and refresh them, his own omnipotency of grace secures their advancement towards the kingdom, for the possession of which it is his province to meeten them. He

* Dr. Owen 10, 75.

is a leader,[1] a teacher,[2] and a comforter.[3] His office is to quicken the dead,[4] to enlighten the dark,[5] to heal the wounded,[6] to remind the forgetful,[7] and to revive the drooping.[8] He helps our infirmities in prayer,[9] applies the promises to the heart,[10] glorifies the Saviour,[11] and bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.[12] It is by him we come to Jesus,[13] have access to God,[14] walk at liberty,[15] and rejoice in hope of glory.[16] He is wind to the vessel,[17] oil to the lamp,[18] fire to consume our offerings,[19] the water of life to the thirsty,[20] and the peaceful dove is his emblem.[21] Oh, what a suitable agent is the Divine Spirit! Blessed are they who seek his counsel, confide in his care, obey his commands, walk in his light, and repose on the succours of his everlasting love!

Here, then, is your sufficiency for the work

[1] Rom. viii. 14. [2] John xiv. 26. [3] John xiv. 16.
[4] John vi. 63. [5] Eph. i. 17, 18. [6] Ps. cxlvii. 3.
[7] John xiv. 26. [8] Hos. xiv. 5. [9] Rom. viii. 26.
[10] Eph. i. 13. [11] John xvi. 14. [12] Rom. viii. 15, 16.
[13] Hos. xi. 4. [14] Eph. ii. 18. [15] 2 Cor. iii. 17.
[16] Rom. xv. 13. [17] John iii. 8. [18] Lev. xxiv. 2.
[19] 1 Thes. v. 19. [20] John iv. 14. [21] Luke iii. 22.

to which you are called by the Gospel; for duty, however arduous; for privileges, however abundant; for conflict, however severe; for spirituality of character, however elevated; and for death, however painful! "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Is. xl. 31.) "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." (Ps. lxii. 5.)

6. *By abiding in Christ, you will receive both the influence and strength needful for your walk.*

To experience much of the love of God, and of the power and preciousness of his truth, you must walk holily before him; and if you are anxious to do his will, you must seek the enjoyment of his presence. The Holy Spirit is concerned as well in the devotion of your lives, as in the spirituality of your minds. He has, therefore, given you directions in reference to both, which, if humbly and perseveringly followed, will tend to the advancement of his kingdom within you, and lead you to attempt its establishment around you.

But how are you to receive that grace which will constrain you to live to the Divine glory? It is treasured up in Christ, and in him there is ample supply. But you must receive it, before you can use it. Grace *in* Christ only, is a Christian doctrine, which, however well it may be understood and ably defended, will never soften the heart and regulate the character: it must be applied by the Holy Spirit; for then, and not till then, will it be effectual to salvation. And if God must employ his own resources for the holiness of his people, surely, in their endeavours to fall in with his designs, they must use them too. If you were called only to defend the Christian system by argument, then a bare knowledge of the truth would suffice; but as your pursuits are spiritual, and as you have to war a good warfare, and to work the work of the Lord, unless you receive Christ and his fulness into your souls, you can neither conquer nor labour. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col. ii. 6.) "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John i. 11, 12.)

But to receive from Christ that assistance which will enable you to walk as children of light, you must *abide in* Christ. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John xv. 4.) In this comparison union is supposed; and the abiding here inculcated, is a consequence of union. We do not say to believers, be ye united to Christ, for their union has already been effected; but we say, *abide in* him; for this is the proof and design of union. The cause of your fruitfulness is in Christ, not in you; and if you could abide in Christ for half a century, and then be separated from him, that moment would witness your destruction. Such a separation, however, is impossible; (Rom viii. 38, 39;) for how can that man perish in whom Christ lives and triumphs? A mere professor of religion has no safeguard around him; and as he appears to be what he really is not, his apostasy in the hour of trial is not surprising. But a branch of the living vine cannot wither. "Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye

have heard from the beginning. *If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*" (1 John ii. 24.) "Abide in me, and I in you."

To abide in Christ is, indeed, a blessed privilege, and one, the honours of which you are unworthy to share; yet, as the activity of the soul, in believing, is its perseverance in well-doing, it is pressed as a duty. To *abide in* Christ is as much a Christian obligation, as to *depend on* God. In fact, to depend upon Christ is the same as to abide in him. It means a daily renunciation of self, with a humble and vigorous cleaving to Christ. The Lord holds his people, and they hold him; and because he does not let them go, they will not, they cannot, let him go. "We love him, because he first loved us;" and as long as his love is the cause, and yours only the effect, so long, and in the same proportion to your believing intercourse with that love, will Jesus be precious. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that *retain-*

eth her." (Prov. iii. 13—18.) You must abide in Christ, or cleave to Christ, and enter more fully into him, in the same way that you were first united to him, and by the same means—by faith, by prayer, by love, and above all, by the Holy Ghost; who, constraining you to take a deeper and livelier interest in the person and work of the Saviour, will enthrone him in your affections, and bring every thought and desire into obedience to his will. And, then, it is not the abiding only that engages your attention; it is, also the *design of it.* You abide in Christ, that you may live, and that you may derive from him the influence and nourishment which will render you healthful and prosperous.

"Faith is," says an evangelical writer, "in the spiritual world, like the law of the vegetable world, by which the fibres of the branches have imparted to them a fitness and an aptitude to receive from the stem the nourishment conveyed by the latter. A branch may, in appearance and externally, be united to the vine; but if it be incapable of absorbing its juices, the union is no more than outward; it is not real, and the branch itself will soon

wither and decay. And in the same manner, if a professing Christian have not faith, if he be not in the exercise of receiving Christ and his benefits, his connection with him is merely external; no real union subsists between them, and he will be a withered branch in the visible church of God. There must be in the soul a power of receiving Christ, and of converting his benefits into sources of nourishment, so as to keep alive within it the Divine life, and to produce between it and Christ an union resembling that amalgamation that takes place between the nutritive particles of food resolved into chyle, and the blood, by which they are incorporated together, and life is maintained in the system. He in whom this process of faith does not take place, hath no life in him. In like manner, believers are spoken of as rooted in Christ, and stablished in the faith. (Col. ii. 7.) As a tree planted in the earth has received from the Creator a fitness and an aptitude to draw nourishment from the soil, so has the Christian received that principle of faith by which he is enabled to draw from the fulness of Christ continual supplies of grace This aptitude in the tree maintains its con

nection with the soil, and this principle of faith in the believer preserves his union to his Lord."*

You are to abide in Christ, then, for the purpose of receiving from him an influence and a power which will render you fruitful in holiness, and give life to your movements when you go to the cross for pardon, or leave it for the field of labour. Wherefore, abide in Christ, that a holy and an attractive consistency may be preserved, and the world be constrained to take knowledge of *you, that you have been with Jesus.*

CHAPTER X.

ABIDING IN CHRIST SECURED BY DIVINE TEACHING.

It is written in the prophets, "They shall be all taught of God;" and the *necessity* of Divine teaching for the holiness of man, is not more apparent to the thoughtful, than are its *consequences* to the observant. But the knowledge which the Holy Spirit imparts is practi-

* Thoughts on union to Christ, by Sosthenes.

cal, as well as experimental; and the wild, daring flights of the visionary are very different from the sober, settled convictions of the truly serious. It is worthy of remark, too, that whether the Spirit convince of sin, comfort the sorrowful, or establish the wavering, knowledge is the moral agency by which he accomplishes his work. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) The written word, which reveals the mind of God, becomes, by the saving influences of the Divine Spirit, the medium of the grace of God; and as the "word worketh effectually in them that believe," and is also the virtual cause of their spiritual fruitfulness, their *abiding in* Christ is in exact proportion to their *knowledge of* Christ. "*Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*"

The Holy Spirit discovers the glory of the Saviour to awaken our desires for his presence, and to prepare us for his service. One end of Divine teaching is a saving and an appropriating knowledge of the Saviour; and an experience of his willingness and power to save is

the consequence. The truths of the Gospel derive all their value and efficacy from the person of Christ; and when the feelings of the heart are hallowed, and the actions of the life adorned, by the spirit of the Gospel, his name will be as ointment poured forth, and the promise or the sermon that discloses his love will be more precious than gold. When we are truly alive to his claims, we are surprised at our indifference to his honour; and from our knowledge of the human heart, and of the power of the tempter, we are led to wonder at the zeal and devotion of those who sacrifice their all to his praise. But, as abiding in Christ is the necessary result of Divine teaching, and as cheerful and conscientious obedience is the inevitable effect of abiding in him, it will appear, to those who give the subject a moment's attentive consideration, that an increase of Divine influence must secure the growth and maturity of Christian graces.

The following passage of Scripture will suggest some profitable reflections on that particular view of Divine teaching which I am anxious you should take. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in

you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and *even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*" (1 John ii. 27.)

We learn from this passage that some are taught, not by conviction only, but by unction; and it is quite evident, that although the latter always includes the former, the former does not necessarily involve the latter. My meaning is this:—you may be fully convinced that the truths you have embraced are the truths of the Gospel, without, at the same time, enjoying their life, or feeling their power. And this, it is to be feared, is the case with a large number of professors of all religious denominations; and which condition accounts for their entire, or comparative, barrenness in the knowledge of the Lord. To be convinced of the authenticity of the Scriptures and of the nature of Divine truth, is well; for this persuasion is one of the elements of Christian character; but to rest in this conviction, to be satisfied with the light it imparts to the mind, and to be contented with the professions to which it leads, without feeling the power, and

possessing the love it is designed, by its great Author, to enthrone upon the conscience, is the fault and error of thousands.

That is teaching by the unction of the Holy One, which conveys the Gospel to the understanding and affections, with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; which moulds and fashions the whole man after the image of the meek and lowly Jesus; and which constrains him to exhibit and to commend its loveliness, purity, and majesty, by Christian consistency. Dr. Owen remarks, "that a teaching by the Spirit of consolation maketh sweet, useful, and joyful to the soul the discoveries that are made of the mind and will of God, in the light of the Spirit of sanctification. We see it by daily experience, that very many have little taste, and sweetness, and relish in their souls of truths, which yet they savingly know and believe; but when we are taught by this unction, oh, how sweet is every thing we know of God! We have this then by the Spirit; he teacheth us of the love of God in Christ; he maketh every Gospel truth as wine well-refined to our souls, and the good things of it to be a feast of fat things; gives us joy and

gladness of heart with all that we know of God, which is the great preservative of the soul to keep it close to the truth. Indeed, to know any truth in the power, sweetness, joy, and gladness of it, is that great security of the soul's constancy in the preservation and retaining of it. *They* will readily change truth for error who find no more sweetness in the one than in the other. A teaching by unction brings joy and gladness with it, by giving the heart a sense of truth wherein we are instructed. When we find any of the good truths of the Gospel come home to our souls with life, vigour, and power, giving us gladness of heart, transforming us into the image and likeness of it, the Holy Ghost is then at work, is pouring out his oil."*

There are some subjects, however, into which the Holy Spirit leads the Christian, that will not admit of this teaching by unction; such as sin—self—and the moral law: these wound and distress; and are used merely to prepare him for the reception of the love of God. The truth which the anointing teacheth, is the doctrine of the cross; for the Gospel is

* Dr. Owen, vol. x. p. 304.

the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. (Rom. i. 16.) By the law is the knowledge of sin, but forgiveness is by the atonement; the former, is the ministration of death; the latter, the ministration of life;—the one, awakens fear; the other, hope; by one, we are terrified at Mount Sinai; and by the other, calmed and blessed at Mount Zion.

It is not, however, a knowledge of the doctrine of a sinner's reconciliation to God by the death of his Son, obtained by conviction only, that will heal the wounds, and stay the tears of the penitent. Thousands are, in their judgments, firmly established in the theory of truth, in whose experience, nevertheless, it is without life and power; they embrace the doctrines, admit their importance, and commend the preacher who illustrates and defends them; but, affecting to say, they are proud, unsanctified, and far from the kingdom of God. The fact is, the most splendid sermon, as to composition, ever preached, and the noblest and most conclusive argumentative defence of Christian doctrine that can be made, must prove powerless as to the sanctification and joy of the heart, without the "unction of the

Holy One." The understanding may be enlightened, the judgment informed, the conscience alarmed, by *conviction;* but the heart can be softened, purified, consoled, and delighted, by *unction only.* "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

The ministry of the Gospel, however faithful, affectionate, and zealous, that ministry may be, apart from Divine influence, can never savingly profit those who attend it. The unction of God, is the power of God; and without it, the means of grace, by whomsoever they are used, cannot bless either the church or the world. One sermon heard and received under the melting and purifying influence of the "anointing that teacheth," will produce more moral good within you, than fifty without it. Much may be heard, when but little is *felt;* and, as it is not by the quantity of food you eat that nature is supported, but by that portion of it which is digested, so, unless you mix faith with what you hear, and thus convert the truth into moral nutriment, the effort of the understanding to embrace and of the memory

to retain the truth, will leave you destitute of its power. If preachers of the Gospel possessed a larger measure of the unction of the Spirit, their ministrations would be more effectual; and they would be more alive to the great designs of their office. The stores of literature, the discoveries of science, the researches of history, are all laid under contribution to serve the cause of Biblical criticism, to aid the expositor of Biblical truth, and to familiarize Divine things to the mind of the Biblical student; and yet, comparatively, our labours are inefficient, and our souls fruitless. If we drunk deep into our Master's spirit; if we always went to the sanctuary in the beauties of holiness to worship God, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the weapons of our warfare, being spiritual, would be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; and the pungency of our ministrations would be an argument for the Divinity of our message, which men might gainsay, but which they could not resist.

The power of truth must be felt, before its preciousness can be enjoyed; and as the love of the Father, and the work of the Son, and

the grace of the Holy Spirit, are not uninteresting topics, but truths of vital and commanding importance; when the "anointing teacheth," in every doctrine there will be power to move, in every promise grace to charm, and in every precept light to guide our way. Truths, with which we have long been familiar, will be accompanied with increased power to impress, and arrayed in new beauties to attract; and, under their influence, we shall rise from our knees to declare our convictions of their value; and to prove, by devotedness to their requirements, our increasing delight in their Author. In a state of religious declension, the mind is either excited by novelties, or the heart settles down into actual indifference to communion with God; and when the form of godliness is substituted for its power, the moral extravagancies of the mystic, and of the ingenious will frequently afford more pleasure than the plain, practical announcements of the Gospel; even though the former never console or sanctify, and although the latter always yield life and joy to those who embrace them. But when taught by the anointing, we fly for relief and for comfort, in the hour of

distress, not to theological novelties, or human inventions, but to the pure truth of the Gospel; which, by guiding us to the person and work of Christ, introduces us to liberty and rest; and secures that consistency which is as essential to our happiness as it is to God's honour.

You ought never, my dear readers, to forget, that Divine truth, without a knowledge of Christ and him crucified, will never satisfy the consistent Christian; and that the more he knows of "Him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," the more highly will he esteem the truth that discovers his beauty to the eye, and sheds his love abroad in the heart. The doctrines, the promises, and the precepts of the Gospel are valued in proportion as they reveal the Saviour, and inspire the breast with zeal for his glory; and as they derive all their importance and their power from their relation to His person, which is "full of grace and truth," a knowledge of him must endear them; and a belief in them must promote communion with him. Dr. Owen justly observes, "As the truth is the only means of illumination, it cannot commu-

nicate any light unto the mind, but only as it is a beam from Christ. Separated from him, and its relation unto him, it cannot communicate any real spiritual light or understanding to the souls of men. Then alone is the mind irradiated with heavenly truth, when it is received as proceeding from, and leading to the Sun of righteousness, the blessed spring of all spiritual light, which is Christ himself. Whatever notional knowledge men may have of Divine truths as they are doctrinally proposed in the Scriptures; yet if they know them not in their respect unto the person of Christ, as the foundation of the counsels of God; if they discern not how they proceed from him, and centre in him, they will bring no saving spiritual light into their understandings. As professors of truth, if separated from Christ, as unto real union, are withering branches; so truths professed, if doctrinally separated from him, or their respect unto him, have no living power or efficacy in the souls of men. He is the life and soul of all truths, without which, as they are written in the word, they are but a dead letter, and that of such a character as is illegible unto us, as unto any real discovery of

the grace and love of God. Hence it is, that the knowledge and profession of the truth with many, is so fruitless, inefficacious, and useless. It is not known in its relation unto Christ, on which account alone it conveys either light or power to the soul. Men profess they know the truth; but they know it not in its proper order, in its harmony and use. It leads them not to Christ, it brings not Christ to them; and so, *as to their holiness and salvation*, is lifeless and useless. Hence ofttimes none are more estranged from the life of God than such as have much notional knowledge of the doctrines of Scripture.

How desirable, then, is that knowledge of the truth, which "the anointing teacheth!" and how important is it to those who would "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called!" My dear young friends, seek this; and seek it constantly and fervently, that your experience may be hallowed, and your practice regulated. As there may be light in the understanding when there is no life in the soul, you must be as cautious against speculative orthodoxy, as against sentimental heterodoxy. The knowledge of truth

which you must possess, to be both happy and consistent, is that which the teaching by unction *alone* can impart; and as this teaching must secure your abiding in Christ;—"*for even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him;*"—it will conform you to his image, elevate you above the world, and constrain you to maintain dignity of character to his glory. You will not then be contented to lay upon his altar a tithe of your time, property, and influence; but all you have will be laid at his feet, in cheerful surrender, to be employed in his service, according to his pleasure. The accomplishment of the designs of truth involves an enjoyment of its power; and the very moment you properly feel your necessities, and rightly express your obligations, that instant will your consistency of character and your advancement in the Divine life be apparent to all about you. One design of the reception, and of the knowledge of truth, is sanctification;[1] another, liberty;[2] a third, humility;[3] a fourth, growth in grace;[4] a fifth, fruitfulness;[5] a sixth, the exhibition of the

[1] John xvii. 17 [2] John viii. 32. [3] 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.
[4] 1 Pet. ii. 2. [5] Col. i. 5, 6.

moral virtues of Christ;[1] and by ascertaining the influence the Gospel has over your character, you may test your knowledge of its truths, and ascertain whether you "have an unction from the Holy One." "Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."[2]

Abide in Christ, then, for practical purposes. God forbid you should attempt to work for life; or, having received the gift, imagine you can preserve it in your own strength. By abiding in Christ, you will guard against self-righteousness; and be constrained to magnify the grace by which you are prepared, in the valley of humiliation, for the battles and the service of the Lord. You can no more labour successfully, as the servants of God, after regeneration; than you could have merited his mercy, when you were far from righteousness. To honour his name, by obedience to his will, you must continually depend on the

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [2] 1 John ii. 24.

Holy Spirit. Your efforts, also, must have Jesus for their beginning and end, to be acceptable in his sight; and as the altar sanctifies the giver and the gift, the means you employ for his glory, will promote, by his blessing attending them, the spirituality of your own minds.

And do not think that you will ever be brought into that state upon earth when the blood of Christ will no longer be required. However heavenly your conversation, enlarged your benevolence, and disinterested your sacrifices, you can have no communion with God, without faith in the blood of his Son. If you work aright, and walk by the directions of his word, in proportion to your exertions for his glory, will your consciousness of obligation to his Spirit increase. Realizing his grace, you will discover so clearly your poverty and guilt, that, in the most obedient and fruitful hour of your lives, you will cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" The doctrine of the atonement will never be more precious to you, than when your practice accords with your professions. Inconsistency, while it argues the absence of life and power from the

heart, hardens the conscience against those very convictions of the necessity and value of the Saviour's blood, which keep alive in the mind of the consistent, intense desires both for pardon and purity.

You must, then, guard and pray against that self-seeking, and that self-pleasing, which is the bane of soul prosperity; and a dishonour to the Christian name. Upon a dying bed, nothing will bear up your sinking spirits, but faith in the doctrine of Divine substitution. Except as your prayers and exertions may aid you in determining the certainty of the Lord's work upon your hearts, they will not, however numerous and spiritual they may have been, afford you one moment's peace. The work of the Holy Spirit, though a work of importance and of necessity, forms no part of a sinner's title to glory; it is his meetness for heaven; but the ground of his acceptance before God, is the obedience and death of Christ, without a tear, or a prayer, or a work, of his own. So perfect and meritorious is the Saviour's righteousness, that the believer, for the sake of it, is forgiven all his trespasses, justified from all the charges of the law, and raised

above condemnation. "His blood cleanseth us from all sin," and removes out of the way every possible obstruction to our salvation. "He is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and the song we sing upon earth, amidst our toils and sufferings, is that which the glorified sing in heaven, as they rest from their labours, and glory in the Saviour's mediation. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

Still, my dear friends, your hearts are so deceitful, that, unless you constantly watch and pray, even the work of the Holy Spirit within you, and your exertions to promote the glory of God by his assistance, will become a snare to you. When your souls are in prosperity, Satan may tempt you to spiritual pride; and in adversity he may awaken desponding fears. He may persuade you to look with some degree of complacency upon this prayer, and upon that exertion; but if you would labour abundantly, and yet be humble you must

pray that the impurity of the duties you have discharged, as well as the sins you have committed, may be washed away in the blood of the Lamb. It is no less your duty to shed tears of repentance over your *labours for* God, than over your *departures from* God. You can do but little for Christ at any time, and in your best moments can lay only a very imperfect offering upon his altar. And when you think of the pride, of the selfishness, and of the folly, which frequently concur to throw a shade around your obedience, you may well hide your heads, and smite your breasts in sorrow. Upon your knees in the closet, at the sacramental table, when you have given either your money or your counsel to his cause, so unworthy have your services been of his notice, that, but for the exercise of his patience, he would have cut you down, and cast you off for ever. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, at the condescension of the Divine Being to the children of men! He bears with their infirmities, and even rewards their diligence. For "a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward." (Mark ix. 41.)

But again, I say, beware of self-righteousness, of inactivity, and of spiritual pride. Live by faith upon the Saviour, and walk humbly with God. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. And even as the anointing hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

Robert Hall has beautifully observed—"As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.

"As in worldly concerns it is of consequence to embrace opportunities, and to improve critical seasons, so it is in the things of the Spirit. There are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, when much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. There are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is

a point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine and every falling shower; how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop." "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hos. x. 12.)

CHAPTER XI.

INDICATIONS OF CHARACTER, AND EXHORTATIONS TO CONSISTENCY.

Our Saviour told his disciples, that in him they should have peace, that he would prepare a place for them in his Father's house, and that he would send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to abide with them for ever. And this he said for the comfort and encouragement of his people in every subsequent age.

But do Christians believe the promises of the Gospel? Are they aware of their numerous privileges, and sincere in their professions of love to God? These questions, startling, and unnecessary as they may, at first, appear, will not, I am sure, upon mature consideration, be thought out of place in a work like this.

In all earthly concerns, men observe something like general consistency; for, whatever may be the folly of the aged, and the imprudence of the young, they pursue the objects of their desires with regularity and perseverance; using the fittest means, according to their judgments, for the accomplishment of their end. Whether their pursuits be scientific, commercial, or literary; or whether they involve merely manual labour and domestic duties, they prosecute their calling with assiduity, and throw into the arrangements of each succeeding day, the experience and the knowledge gained by either the failures or the successes of the preceding one. They are aware of the laws by which Divine Providence controls the universe, and of the principles by which the events of a nation, of a family, or of an individual, are conducted to their legitimate issues; and they act

accordingly. If they wish to preserve health, they will, if they have the opportunity of doing so, strictly observe physical rules; and if they desire the removal of disease, they will employ the means which God has mercifully appointed for this purpose. If they contemplate success in any undertaking, they will neither neglect nor disturb that course of circumstances which they believe will lead to the anticipated result; and in proportion to the importance of the undertaking, and to the difficulties which attend it, will be their devotion to its claims. If they intend to provide, by honest means, for the probable wants of old age, or for the necessities of a rising family, they will raise their income to the highest possible rate, and preserve their expenditure within prudent limits, if not reduce it to the lowest possible scale of disbursement, consistent with faith in Divine Providence, and gratitude for the blessings it bestows. And where is the man who would not part with the lesser good for a greater, and relinquish one engagement for another more favourable to his desires, and more advantageous to his circumstances? At all events, the men of the world

evince consistency in their pursuits; they rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. There is a uniformity in their designs and efforts. They are convinced, and upon that conviction, if possible, they act.

But are Christians as consistent in reference to their devotions, as worldly men are in reference to their occupations? Our Saviour said, and for the truth of his saying we may refer to the conduct of those whom it concerns—"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke xvi. 8.) Yes, indeed;—the latter are inconsiderate and imprudent, compared with the former. The one have their impressions, and retain them; the other act as if they had never been influenced by principles, which yet they acknowledge to be dearer to them than life. Christians, though the most reasonable of men, are, in some cases, the most inconsistent. Their love to God, their belief in the Saviour, and their delight in spiritual blessings, is perfectly consistent. Whatever they do for God, by his direction, is their reasonable service; but when their habits and conduct are compared with their privileges, and their professions

with their pursuits, then appears their inconsistency. "That the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and that when they would do good, evil is present with them," is a truth which no Christian can deny; and religious experience may solve this difficulty to the satisfaction of the casuist. Still the impression, in all its fulness and power, remains, that the Christian is the most inconsistent of men.

Not to refer to the individual who has but recently been convinced of sin, and who may be in doubt and distress, let us, for a moment, turn our attention to those who have something like the full assurance of hope, and who have reason to conclude that they are the children of God. As the question recurs—Do these persons believe the Bible, and are they sincere in their avowals?—let us institute inquiry into the subject. Believe the Bible! say you—why, who can doubt their faith in the Scriptures, since they have embraced him of whom they testify, even Jesus, the Saviour of sinners? They rely on his atonement for acceptance with God; he is to them the altogether lovely, and the chief of ten thousand. They acknowledge him to be their Lord, they

have chosen him for their portion, and the Holy Spirit has enabled them to resolve, henceforth and for ever, to serve him. Besides, they speak of the manifestations of his presence, of the wounds he has healed, of the doubts he has removed, and of the bliss he has imparted. In prayer they pour forth their souls in ardent and intense supplications; in confessing their sin they lament its commission, feel its burthen, and avow hostility to its very being; and in praise and adoration they express their love to God, and bless him with all their souls.

Well, all this is true; and more than this is felt, if we may credit what is said. But we cannot help asking the question—Do they believe the Bible? To question the existence of their faith in the Scriptures would, you tell us, unchristianize them altogether; for "he that believeth not, shall be damned." But this is neither our intention nor desire. Why, then, ask the question? Simply for this reason;—that, receiving a confession of their faith, we may, with fidelity and affection, remind them of their inconsistencies.

What, then, do the Scriptures declare con-

cerning the state, the privileges, and the prospects of the Christian? To answer this inquiry at length is beyond our purpose, and would occupy more time than we can spare. We may, however, just observe, that the Christian—I speak of the man to whom the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians is generally applicable—is a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ; he is accepted, justified, pardoned, adopted, and in actual union with the Son of the everlasting Father; and by the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost he is sanctified, and brought into fellowship with God. He is watched, defended, guided and upheld by the Saviour every moment of his life; his bread and water are sure; and his afflictions are an agency which Infinite Wisdom employs for his purity, peace and comfort. Jesus was born, and died, rose, and ascended to heaven, and ever lives to make intercession for him;—"all things are his, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.) And then, to crown the whole, he is travelling

to glory, and, in God's appointed time, shall sit with Christ upon his throne. (Rev. iii. 21.) Here we pause—for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.)

If such, then, be the Christian's privileges and prospects;—if such his relation to God, and angels, and heaven;—if such his supports and consolations;—if Jesus be his friend, his brother, his portion;—what ought to be the spirituality of his mind, the sanctity of his affections, and the devotion of his life? He ought to live, to speak, and to act, not as a man of this world, but as an inhabitant of another; not as a being whose powers of mind are called into existence to be amused with that which is material, or to explore the depths of that which is intellectual only in its relation to time, but as a being who has been brought into union with the Deity; and who from the depths of

God's eternal blessedness is destined to draw his life and his felicity through illimitable ages;—as a man for whose salvation the Son of God expired upon the cross amid the execrations of devils, and the outpourings of his Father's ire;—as a man for whom heaven is prepared, and who is in preparation for its services and enjoyments. Oh! who can tell what the Christian ought to be? for who can balance his glory, or measure his bliss? But he *is* a Christian—he feels that he is one—and this is enough for our purpose.

Now let us ask, What are his habits? Are they in character with his professions? Remember, we do not plead for such a religious state of mind as would unfit him for the ordinary duties of life. The Christian probably is a man of business, or the father of a family, or he may be called to sway the destinies or the sceptre of an empire; and whatever situation in life Providence may call him to fill, he must not be inattentive to its obligations. All that we plead for is Christian consistency, as well in its relation to God as to man. But Christians, generally, live and act as if they credited only a part of the Bible; as if they were in-

terested in but few of its promises; or as if they were bound to regard only now and then one of its precepts. Oh, for an elevated standard of piety! for powerful impressions of Divine things! and for an influence that shall bear us onward in the ways of God to victories and to triumphs of which we have read—in the contemplation of which we have indulged—but the glories and the songs of which we have neither shared nor sung!

My dear young friends, let me detain your attention for a few moments longer, to guard you against some of the common infirmities of your fathers, and to exhort you to a noble consistency in your profession of the Gospel

Let me caution you against an unlawful attachment to earthly things. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 2, 3.) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." (1 John ii. 15.) The world is your enemy. Christ has, indeed, overcome it for you, and you have gained a victory over it by faith, yet it will apply its enmity and pride, its wisdom and depravity, to prevent

your progress in the life of faith. Fight, therefore, that you may lay hold on eternal life. The world will be to you, what it has ever been to the Christian, not a vineyard of delights, but a land of thorns—a weary land. Visionary beauties have been sketched by the writers of novels to amuse the man of fashion, and to intoxicate the thoughtless; but before the delusive hope of the romantic has settled down into calm expectation, or the poisonous nectar has moistened the feverish lip of the dissolute, a crowd of cares, which neither gaiety nor infidelity can throw off, bear down the energies of both body and mind; and man starts from his dream of earthly bliss to endure the ills of a life which sin has imbittered, but which religion has never blessed. If it be inconsistent with the design of man's moral being, and with the religious advantages which he either does, or which he might enjoy, to fix his affections on earth, surely it must be much more inconsistent for a Christian so to do.

Live in the constant expectation of a dying hour. Death is always about us; it hangs on every throne the memorials of mortality,

opens a sepulchre in every social connexion, bathes every family in tears, and conquers him before whom a world has trembled. "Surely the people is grass." And you, too, *must* die; and you *may* die soon. Be, then, at all times, detached from earth, that, when death arrives, you may be neither surprised at its approach, nor unprepared to meet it. It must be a solemn thing to pass the threshold of time into that dark-unseen, whither all go, but whence none return; yet it is your privilege not only to meet death with calm submission, but with holy joy. If you go to the grave leaning on Jesus, you need not fear falling into it. He will be your light and salvation; your refuge and strength. There may be but a step between you and the tomb, or years may roll away before you reach it; but of one thing be assured—if your conversation be *now* in heaven, you will be prepared to shun the temptations of life, and to sustain the conflicts of the parting hour. "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matt. xxiv. 42.)

Again. To be consistent with your professions, you must not be alarmed at afflic-

tions, nor rebellious and discontented when passing through them. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward;" and each Christian must "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." (Col. i. 24.) The waters of sorrow roll as well through the rich man's domain, and sometimes with as much impetuosity, as by the poor man's door; and you are to be chastened of the Lord now, that you may not be condemned with the world. The songs of the cheerful are often suspended by mournful tidings; sighs will heave the breast of the contented; and, sooner or later, the ordinary shocks of life will awaken the sympathies, if not the fears, of the heart that never felt a pang. And even you, though sheltered in the Rock of Ages from the storms of Divine vengeance, must expect to experience changes and disappointments. "*In the world, ye shall have tribulation.*" (John xvi. 33.) *That very state of being* which connects you with glory on the one hand, subjects you to the privations and distresses of a pilgrimage on the other. But you must neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him; either

of these states of mind is an inconsistency you must pray for grace to avoid.

To be consoled by Christ in seasons of sorrow, you must believe his word; and while you seek to enjoy his presence, you must strive to do his will. If Christians thought less of their own ease, or even of their comfort, and more of the Saviour's glory; and if, instead of seeking rest without any, or but little, consideration for his honour, they sought to please him in all they did and said, and then left their comfort with him, believing that he will be mindful of his covenant, and of the people for whom that covenant was made; they would, in all probability, enjoy more of the divine approbation. You must never separate the interests of the Father from those of the child. His will is your salvation; and if you would receive the blessings of that salvation in their fulness and variety, your will must be his glory. If you seek what he seeks, you will enjoy what he promises; but if your aim in desiring, be not his in giving, you will turn his hand from you, and place yourselves before him, not in a recipient, but, in a repulsive position. It is of

immense importance for you to consider, *that one of the main causes of the religious adversity of the church of Christ, is her want of conformity of desire and design to the will and design of God.*

"Make you his service your delight;
Your wants shall be his care."

You have, I doubt not, already found that this world is chequered and changeful; that your circumstances, connexions, feelings, joys, and hopes, are all subject to painful variations, and of this, every day's experience and observation will more fully convince you. The sea of life is ever moving, and the shore is always strewed with wrecks. How inconsistent then are they who dream

"Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave!"

The gain of to-day, may be the loss of to-morrow; and those very occurrences which have yielded delight may, by the very hope they have awakened, increase the distress they promise to diminish: for if the heart be enlarged or relieved by supplies which it has no power to detain, upon their departure, the vacuum

will be larger, and the burthen heavier, than before; and thus, the elevations of life render its downfalls more terrific and affecting. Look around you, and even beyond the narrow circle of your own movements. Are not thrones tottering? Are not the elevated sinking? Are not the falling hurried downward in their care-worn course? And the hand that has liberally and often supplied the destitute, is it not now stretched out to receive the offerings of the benevolent? Guard, then, against expectations which the Bible does not inspire, which life cannot generally realize; and thus preserve consistency. You are in fellowship with saints and angels; and if you commune with that God whose unchanging love is the source of their happiness, and depend upon his immutability, you may become like the oak of the forest or the rock of the ocean.

Beware, also, of a discontented, fretful, peevish state of mind, which is as inconsistent with your professions, as it is injurious to your peace.

"Here perfect bliss can ne'er be found;"

and those very mercies which a kind Provi-

dence designs for man's comfort, are, by the unbelief of the heart, converted into an agency for exciting desires which neither heaven nor earth can satisfy. The lowly desire elevation, and the exalted aspire to higher standards of dignity. The rich, by avariciousness, destroy their own comfort; and the miser, denying himself and his family the ordinary blessings of life, is, though in possession of "more than heart could wish," the most wretched of beings. If circumstances frown, men are frequently miserable; and if they smile they are not happy: in the one case, they want what they are denied, and are discontented; and in the other, fear the loss of what they have, and are distrustful. The night is too long for some, and too short for others. The sun shines when it ought not, and does not when it ought. The weather is either too wet or too dry; too hot or too cold. Every thing is out of place, and nothing is in character. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with every body, and with almost every thing about them. Their anxiety *in*creases with their mercies, and their gratitude *de*creases with the multiplication of their obligations to thankfulness. At home, nothing seems to

please them better than an opportunity of displeasing others; and abroad, the common incidents of life either create their disgust, or render them, by the peevishness and fretfulness they occasion, disgustful to all about them. These are the murmurers and complainers which have ever been, and ever will be, as long as they continue, a moral pest in our social system. "Finding fault with every providential dispensation, they are persons whom neither God nor man can please." And it is to be lamented that the Christian is frequently discontented with the allotments of Divine Providence, and far from being satisfied with God's will. He is told that all things work together for his good, (Rom viii. 28,) and that no good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly; (Ps. lxxxiv. 11;) but he is distrustful and unhappy. And, indeed, if he be *unbelieving*, he *must be* miserable; for promises without faith, are, to him, words without meaning; and, if *rebellious*, even the fulfilment of the promises can afford him no joy. To be really happy, it is not necessary that he should be in prosperous circumstances; but it is absolutely necessary that he be reconciled to the Divine

will. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. vi. 6.) Therefore, my dear young friends, learn to be satisfied with the Lord's goodness, and thus preserve Christian consistency, as well in adversity as in prosperity.

> "Simple, teachable, and mild,
> Changed into a little child;
> Pleased with all the Lord provides,
> Weaned from all the world besides."

It is important for you, again, to remember, that the path of life, from the cradle to the tomb, is full of snares; and that to walk *safely*, you must walk *circumspectly*. You acknowledge that God only can guide and uphold you; and if you do but allow your convictions to influence your procedure, all will be well. To confess your liability to err and to fall, and yet to refuse Divine counsel and the support of the Divine arm, is palpable inconsistency. There are snares for the hand and the foot, for the head and the heart; and we are sometimes entangled when we suspect no danger. With property and poverty, in health and in sickness, with talent and learning, in friends and foes, in gifts and grace,

there are snares against which you must pray and guard every hour. Satan can tempt by external circumstances, or without them. He can employ the lusts of the flesh, as well as the pride of life. He can induce presumption, when the success, whether religious or commercial, by which it is sustained, pleads for humility and caution; and he can enthrone despair upon the conscience, when the promises warrant the liveliest and the steadiest hope in God's mercy. In the absence of earthly good, he can distress; and when affluence unlocks her treasures to enrich, he can endanger. In want he will tempt us to forget God, who *can give;* and in plenty, to lose sight of God, who *has given:* so that frequently, instead of enjoying God in all things, and all things in God, we seek gratification separate from him, and then wonder at the disappointment and vexation which follow. Now, against all these infirmities, and others which might be mentioned, you must watch and pray, in order to be consistent followers of the Saviour; and to encourage this consistency, let me remind you of one or two facts, calculated, with the Divine blessing, to preserve it.

Providential blessings are sure to the consistent Christian; so that you need not fear or be distrustful. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of food and clothing; and if you seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. vi. 33.) To extremities you may be brought; but the barrel of meal shall not waste, nor shall the cruse of oil fail. Bread shall be given, and water shall be sure. (Is. xxxiii. 16.) All hearts are in his hands, all events are subject to his control and are under his direction, and all the treasures of the earth are at his disposal. He can do what he pleases, and he will do what is right. Your supplies may not come when, or whence, you expect them; but they *shall come*. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Pr. xvi. 33.) And your lot, be it what it may, is the very lot that is best for you. Your Father keeps the purse, and will defray all the expenses of your journey, whether long or short; but you must

not expect that he will allow you to choose for yourselves. He is too wise and too kind, to do this. He will provide what is best for you, and secure your communion with himself, either by giving or by withholding, as it may please him. Your blessings are safe in his hands; and if he should feed you day *by* day with the poor of his family, be assured it is that *every* day your wants may be supplied. It is your mercy, and it ought to be your happiness, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you in all places; and it will be but an act of Christian consistency on your part to trust him at all times, without even a murmuring word or a rebellious thought.

Your spiritual mercies, also, are both sure and abundant. You are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. i. 3.) Oh, how extensive is the surface, and how deep the bed of that river whence "streams of mercy never-ceasing" flow! Jesus will be to you "as rivers of water in a dry place." (Is. xxxii. 2.) Mark this well. With him there are not a few tributary streams, sufficient only to refresh a few

and that only for a few days; but rivers, deep and wide, which never dry up; and which, like the rock in the wilderness, will follow you all your journey through. Alluding to a prosperous state of the church, the prophet Isaiah predicted that Jehovah would open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; that he would make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water, for his people; (Is. xli. 18;) and all this, and more than this, is yours in hope, and ought to be yours in actual enjoyment. "Open thy mouth wide," said God, "and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxxi. 10.) "Ask, and ye shall receive; that your joy may be full." (John xvi. 24.)

Seeing, then, that both your temporal and spiritual mercies are sure, that you can neither want nor desire any thing that is for your good, that God has not promised; and that you are as much the objects of his gracious care, as if you were the only creatures that occupied his attention, or shared his love; is it not your privilege, as it is your duty, to submit to his will, to do his pleasure, and to go on your way rejoicing? All this you must admit;

but you tell us of difficulties which, *you* think, it is scarcely possible for you to overcome. That there are difficulties, cannot be denied, but you must not be discouraged by them; for more are they that are for you, than are they that are against you. May I request you to read again attentively, the 5th section, on the 152d page? It will, I think, recall your recollection to some points of importance; and as you are reading, I hope, not for amusement, but for profit, to get through the book will not be so much your object, as, by meditation and prayer, to understand it.

Then, again, to be consistent, you must look to Jesus for all you need and God has promised. None can work cheerfully, or run safely, without looking to Jesus. It is not enough for you to say, we have looked; you must continue to look. When tempted, look to him for succour; when afflicted, for consolation; when perplexed, for direction; and when weak, for strength. Some are looking *for* the Saviour, who doubt their interest in his love. Others are looking *to* him with an appropriating faith as their Saviour; but whether your faith be weak or strong, your evidences bright

or obscure, you must look to Jesus. There are many allurements to "the sinner's wandering eye;" and as you cannot look at the eastern and western horizon at the same instant of time, nor examine at once two distinct and separate objects, the difficulty of looking *only* to Jesus is considerable. Yet one reason why Zion's travellers move on so slowly and so heavily, is, they do not look exclusively to Jesus. They look to themselves, and are distressed; and *within* for that which dwells only in him, and they are disappointed. For a man, rapidly sinking under disease, to depend upon his own resources for its arrest and removal, is just as rational, as for a sinner to expect health and salvation without looking to Jesus. We are all naturally disposed to self-dependence; and instead of believing in Christ, that we may rise above circumstances and walk by faith alone, we subject ourselves to their control, and become more the creatures of sense, than the children of faith. The loser regrets his loss, and sometimes, with rebellion of heart, casts a lingering eye after the sunshine of life, when adversity

has obscured its glories. The gainer looks at his gain with unmeasured and unwarrantable satisfaction, and forgets the Giver, or that the tenure by which he holds his possessions is very feeble. The traveller looks at the apparent dangers of his journey, and being insensible of his Father's care and protection, he dishonours his name, and even refuses his counsel. The mariner looks at the storm, and is alarmed; when he ought to rest in the skill of the Pilot, and be confident. The soldier looks at the army that opposes him; the captive, at his chains; the tempted, at the tempter; the burdened, at his load; but none look to Jesus as they ought. We have seen the folly, lamented the inconsistency, confessed the sin, and been injured by the consequences of looking so much to circumstances; but no sooner is one prop removed from under us, than we seek and lean upon another. Cease from man, is our motto: departure from Christ, is our practice. We mistake the step, for the throne to which it leads; or make the lodge on the road, erected merely for the refreshment of travellers, our resting place; instead of availing ourselves, for a moment only,

of its provisions, that we may, with firmer step and quicker pace, pursue our journey to the skies.

Is all this true? then, my dear readers, let the infirmities of those who have preceded you in the Divine life, be considered as so many powerful arguments for Christian consistency. If you have less experience than your fathers in the faith, you may profit by their mistakes. The battles they have lost, as well as the victories they have won, are fruitful sources of instruction to those who are putting on the armour, or just entering the field; and by quietly observing their aggressions upon the foe, or the inroads of the enemy, you may become prepared for making an attack, or for resisting one, without striking a blow or sustaining an injury. It is a point of wisdom, not only to imitate the excellencies, but, to avoid the inconsistencies of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Where they have failed, let it be your prayerful concern to succeed. But attempt nothing, however important or trifling, without looking unto Jesus. "They looked," it is said in the 34th Psalm, "and were lightened, and their

faces were not ashamed:" and if you look, you will be enlightened and emboldened too. In his light a thousand encouragements are at all times visible; and though you may be surrounded by the wrecks of fortune and signs of desolation; yet, serving and communing with him, evident marks of the Divine wisdom and goodness will arrest your attention, and enliven your hope. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Ps. xxvii. 10.) Look unto Jesus, then, that in every storm you may smile at the thunders around you, and triumph in the grace which allays the fears they awaken.

Heaven is before you; and all is consistency there. Its untiring devotions, its ceaseless praises, and its enraptured delights, are all in character with the holiness, the happiness, and the union of the glorified. And can you not, while travelling home to God, emulate their consistency? Let the attempt be made, and made in faith; and the very hope of heaven, with which such an effort must be associated, will shed a celestial influence upon your character, and embalm your actions with odours

from the Paradise of God. To heaven you are travelling, for its rest you are labouring, and to its moral dignities you ought to aspire. Already have its elements sanctified your hearts, and its glories tinged your horizon. You have drunk the waters, tasted the fruit, and plucked some of the flowers of the garden of God. By faith in the blood of Jesus you have already entered into the holiest of all; (Heb. x. 19;) and from what you have seen, and heard, and observed, there, you must have sympathized with its inhabitants; from the sources of their felicity you must have drawn consolations for your journey; and, as their inspirations have been enkindled in your bosoms, is it too much to expect that their principles will guide your course? Jesus is their light, and their glory; and he is your rest and salvation. In his presence *they* live and triumph; and by his grace *you* are sustained and encouraged. A knowledge of him, will identify you with them; and a contemplation of *their* bliss, will by the Holy Spirit, conform you to *his* image. The church of God is one; and whatever may be the comparative superiority of the redeemed in heaven to the re-

deemed on earth, the approximation of the latter to the former, in spirit and design, ought to be as apparent, as the union of both to the Saviour is evident. One in Christ, they are one in feeling, purpose, and pursuit; and from this identity, felt and acknowledged, results an influence to sustain the triumphs of the child above, and a power to regulate the temper and the conduct of the child below.

Wherefore unite with the spirits of just men made perfect, in their grateful and adoring celebrations, and come to Jesus, whose love they sing; that heaven's purity and bliss may consecrate earth, and earth be a consecrated path-way to heaven. Then will that consistency be preserved which is the safeguard of your interests, the test of your sincerity, and the best possible evidence that can be given of your conversion to God—of your love to the Saviour—and of your being prepared, by the Holy Spirit, for the occupations and delights of a blessed immortality.

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (1 John ii. 28.)

CHAPTER XII.

APPEALS AND INVITATIONS TO DOUBTING AND TIMID CHRISTIANS.

As some persons may read the preceding pages, who are far from being assured of their acceptance with God, and who, in consequence, are neither happy nor decided in their profession of the Gospel; it appears desirable to close these remarks with an address to doubting and timid Christians; especially as some for whom this little volume is designed, not having publicly avowed their attachment to the Saviour, may, on this very ground, be tempted to conclude they are not entitled to Christian privileges, nor bound to the observance of Christian consistency.

Among persons of this description are to be found some of the most amiable and serious disciples of the Lord; and who, notwithstanding their darkness and distress, are evidently taught of God. They are a most interesting class of individuals, both in their relations to time and eternity. Their convictions and im-

pressions on the one hand, their doubts and indecision on the other, and the manifest influence of both upon their character, must awaken the sympathies and secure the prayerful solicitude of all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." (Is. xxxv. 3, 4.)

Yes, my dear friends, "*he will come and save you.*" From the holy Scriptures, without any reference to your convictions, you may learn the gracious character of the Divine will, and the sufficiency of the atonement, first, to answer all the ends of moral administration; and, then, to secure the justification and holiness of the guilty and unclean; but to arrive at just conclusions concerning your state before God, you must argue as well from the work of the Holy Spirit as from the positive statements of the Bible. And as your object is not so much to ascertain how a sinner can be just with God, (for on this point it is supposed your judgment is scrip-

turally informed,) as whether you are personally accepted in the Beloved, the question to be decided, is, Has God begun his good work of grace in your hearts? At present you doubt this, and, therefore, go mourning all the day.

Now, to assist you in determining this question, we must first inquire into those discoveries which the Holy Spirit has made to your understandings, and which have affected your hearts. Has he not, then, so deeply convinced you of your depravity, of your need of pardon, of the vanity of the world, of the glory of the Gospel, and of the certainty of your perishing for ever without Christ, that you have felt, and are feeling, the burthen of sin, and are seeking mercy through the blood of the cross? So important, in your judgment, is the witness of the Holy Spirit that you are the children of God, that you are in possession of no earthly treasure with which you would not freely part to receive it. You may not have felt so deeply, nor have mourned so bitterly, as others with whom you have conversed, and with whom you sometimes compare yourselves, for the purpose of ascer-

taining, if possible, whether your exercises are any thing like theirs; but your impressions have been sufficiently powerful to cause you to cry, What shall we do to be saved? and your discoveries of the Saviour's glory and compassion are sufficiently clear and commanding to constrain you to desire the manifestations of his presence, and the purifying influence of his precious blood. Sometimes, indeed, you think you have not been sufficiently convinced of sin; and at other times you conceive that the number of your transgressions is a barrier to your acceptance with God. One day you are cheered by hope; on another, distressed by fear; but of one thing you are sure—that whereas you were blind, now you see; and that although you once neglected God's salvation, an interest in its blessings now occupies not only your thoughts, but your ardent and persevering supplications.

"Mercy, good Lord! mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
Mercy, through Christ, is all my suit;
Lord! let thy mercy come."

All this you feel and acknowledge. Well,

let me now call your attention to some of those gracious declarations in which you are interested; for if God has made special communications to a certain description of persons, and you are among them, in making them he designed your instruction and comfort. He has said to those who come to him, that they shall in no wise be cast out;[1] that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, are already blessed, and shall be filled,[2] that those who mourn, shall be comforted;[3] that those who seek, shall find;[4] that the wounded shall be healed;[5] that the drawings of the Spirit result from God's everlasting love;[6] and that all spiritual exercises are the effects of Divine influence.[7]

But are we, you ask, interested in these gracious promises? Why, if you are sincere and honest in your researches, you must know whether sin be a burthen or not, whether you are seeking God, and whether you are thirsting for the waters of life. You may doubt your safety; but objects of sense are not more

[1] John vi. 37. [2] Matt. v. 6. [3] Matt. v. 4.
[4] Matt. vii. 7. [5] Ps. cxlvii. 3. [6] Jer xxxi. 3.
[7] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

visible to the eye of the body, than is your guilt and the Saviour's glory to the eye of your mind. You are conscious that a change has taken place in your views and feelings; and although you may be tempted to overlook this fact, yet, in your thoughtful moments, you can no more doubt it than you can question your existence. There may be a fear that God is not the author of this change; that it is the result, not of his Spirit's operations, but of education, of religious excitement, or of a naturally-alarmed conscience. You may not, at present, know that what you have seen and felt is just what all who are taught of God see and feel; you may not be able either to account for your impressions, or to describe the process by which they have been so sensibly deepened, that they have become essential parts of your moral being; but if any one were to attempt to persuade you that your convictions, desires, and pursuits, are precisely what they always have been, would you not regard him as one that had assailed your principles? At one time you could live without prayer, without reading the Scriptures, without any concern for the salvation of your

souls; but can you do this now? Or if, however, you did not *entirely* neglect religious exercises, they have assumed so commanding an influence over your character, that, although your external habits may be the same, or nearly so, that they generally have been, the principles by which you are now governed have invested the whole range of religious pursuit with an importance which till recently, you never felt or acknowledged. Is not the care of the soul the one thing needful? and your cry,

> "A Saviour, or I die!
> A Redeemer, or I perish!"

Compared with some Christians, indeed, your light may appear darkness, and your conviction insensibility. God has dealt so bountifully with them, that it may seem as if he had not dealt graciously with you. They are so far before you in the path of life, and they feel and enjoy so much of the Gospel, that you are tempted to think you have seen and felt nothing, and that you have not yet taken one step towards heaven. Yet it is singular, that though you have not their expe-

rience, they either have, or they have had, yours. You cannot sympathize with them in all their exercises; but they can with you in all yours. You may not possess their evidences; but of this be assured, they have neither hope nor joy apart from yours. The very feelings and lamentations which give to your religious professions all their peculiarities, painful as they may be, were those which have given to their possessions all their glory and felicity. They wept as you weep; they doubted as you doubt; they were tempted as you are tempted; they sought and found what you are seeking, and what you shall find too. If some beatified spirits could descend from their abodes of bliss, to throw light around your path, even they would tell you that the religion which had glory for its end, had sorrow for sin, desires for pardon, and prayer for holiness for its beginning; and as you are running their race, and fighting their battles, you shall reach their goal, and share their enjoyments. But you cannot yet see this, nor recognise your identity with the people of God; so that, by comparing yourselves with them,

instead of being relieved, you may be perplexed.

Let me then ask, whether, as you cannot identify yourselves with the church of God, you are in union with the world? No man can serve two masters; and they that are not with Christ, are against him. Now, to whatever class of worldly men you may direct your attention, whether to the infidel, to the licentious, or to the gay—can you sympathize with any of them? Do you feel that, with your present convictions, it would be possible for you to cast off the restraints which Divine grace has imposed, and to become one with those who have no religion at all, or who have only the *form* without the *power* of true religion? What communion hath light with darkness? You occupy a position between the man of the world, who cares not for Divine things, and the Christian, who embracing them, is assured of his interest in them. Now, the alternative is this: either you are one with the wicked, or one with the righteous; you are alive to God by the renewings of his Spirit, or dead in trespasses and sins. Neutrality, as a state of moral being, is as impossible to the

inhabitants of this world as it is to the inhabitants of another. But you know that you have said, and are saying to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God;" (Ps. cxix. 115;) and to the Christian, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth i. 16.)

Surely, then, my dear friends, the Lord has done great things for you; and your consciousness of his goodness places you under solemn obligations to avow yourselves on his side. His work in the hearts of those now in heaven issued in those desires and prayers, in that faith and repentance, which are your distinguishing characteristics; and as none perish who are meetened for glory, your evidences of being born from above, though not bright, are of a satisfactory order. Because you have not the full assurance of faith, you must not, on this account, refuse the consolation to which the weak in faith are entitled. If you had what others in the church of God have, then you think you might be confident; but at present you suppose it is not right for you to cherish even a *hope* of glory. That there can

be no scriptural assurance of safety without the witness and the seal of the Holy Spirit, we allow; but that the witness of the Spirit is ever enjoyed by those who are entire strangers to his holy influence, we deny. *You* must argue from his work to his love, and not from his love to his work. For, to treat with God's purpose concerning you, or with your interest in his promises, as abstract questions, unconnected either with his operations or your exercises, would be as absurd as the attempt to reason upon the nature of light or air, without the most distant allusion to their properties or their effects. If God has taught you your need of mercy, and enabled you to seek it in the way in which he assures you it may, and, indeed, must be found, his thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, and his determination is to bless you. He has never said to the praying seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain."

Do not, then, despise the day of small things; or be unthankful for the evidences God has given you, because they are neither so bright nor so numerous as you may desire. It becomes you to accept with gratitude the

tokens of his favour whenever they are given; and to use them for the purposes to which he intends they should be applied. If he thought of the change, which you are conscious has taken place within you, as you think of it; or if he rejected those confessions and prayers, which are indications of your character, as you reject his instructions and consolations, which are expressions of his love, how alarming would be your condition, and how gloomy your prospects! But this he does not. He can clearly discern that which is spiritual, from that which is natural; for he knoweth the mind of his own Spirit in your groanings and intercessions; and a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 13, 14.) How encouraging must this be to your hope in seasons of despondency! and what a powerful incentive is it to gratitude for blessings received, when tempted to overlook them because they are few, or because they may not have come to you precisely in the same way in which they have to others.

If you have not enjoyed the sealings of the Spirit, you have felt the drawings of the Spirit; and as the first-fruits of grace are related to the harvest of glory, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. cxxvi. 6.)

But you seem to forget that all the Holy Spirit's saving operations are alike indispensable, and gracious; hence the high estimate you form of liberty and rest, and the low estimate of that anxiety and labour which are their necessary antecedents. The desire for grace, is as much the *work* of the Spirit, as the grace desired, is the *gift* of the Spirit. The appetite and the food are alike of God, and alike expressive of his purpose. Why then be unmindful of the former, in your anxiety to possess the latter? Has it never struck you, that ingratitude for one blessing may be the cause why God withholds another? If you are unthankful for those impressions of your guilt, and for those convictions of your need of mercy, which must precede a knowledge of pardon, and the reception of mercy;—

God may, for this very reason, suspend, for a time, the influence by which alone distress can be removed, and joy awakened. He will be praised for preparing you for the reception of his love, as well as for its actual and refreshing manifestations. You can no more be healed without being wounded, or raised to a lively hope of interest in the Redeemer before you have despaired of all hope in yourselves, than you can be wounded, without being healed, or seek mercy, without finding it. Glory is not more connected with grace, than grace is with glory. The one, is the end of a beginning; the other, the beginning of an end; and whether you have been drawn to the cross by love, or driven by terror, in either case, you have great cause for thankfulness. You cannot be glorified without being justified and sanctified; and if you are justified and sanctified, you must be glorified.

But here lies your difficulty. *Have we passed from death unto life, and are we exempt from all danger of perishing for ever?* You are told by St. Paul, that all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be by the law of Moses;

(Acts xiii. 39;) and, that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Rom. viii. 14.) Are you, then, believers in Christ? If you are, the privileges of believers are all yours. You may doubt the existence of that faith in your hearts, which is of the operation of God, but if you have fled to the Saviour for refuge; if you are coming to God through him for holiness, peace, and pardon; and if you are reposing upon his sacrifice as the only ground of your acceptance in the Divine sight, you have certainly performed an act of faith, and must therefore be in possession of the grace of faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x. 10.) "Saving faith," said Robert Hall, "consists in such a persuasion of our condition as sinners, as induces us to relinquish all other hope, and to place our dependence alone on Jesus Christ for salvation; acknowledging him to be our Lord;" and as you have felt and done this, God will honour his work within you by affixing his seal of approbation to those exercises which are the effects of it. "This is the work

of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" (John vi. 29;) and "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. cxi. 10.)

It is, further, of importance you should remember, that the Lord's conduct towards you, is an expression of his good pleasure concerning you. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us," said Manoah's wife, "he would not have shown us these things;" and as the Holy Spirit has made saving and influential discoveries of the truth to you, it is the will of God that you should live, and not die. Your anxiety to know how you stand with God, and your dread of deception, is perfectly consistent with your convictions of his purity and power, and of your guilt and misery; but you have not, you tell us, access to God's decrees, and do not therefore know whether your names are in the Lamb's book of life. That you have not looked into that volume which the eye of Omniscience alone can scan, is true; nor is it necessary either for your hope or your confidence, that you should do so. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong

unto us, and to our children for ever." In the first place, you have the Bible, which is, partly, a transcript of the mysterious roll of the Divine purposes, sufficiently perspicuous to relieve all your difficulties, and to satisfy all lawful inquiries; and, in the next place, you have the testimony of an enlightened conscience, which, when studied in the light of the Divine word, by the teaching of the Divine Spirit, will present the hand-writing of the Great Invisible in characters, not of wrath, but of mercy; not of anger, but of love. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. viii. 10, 12.) And is not this promise yours, with all its consequent blessings and encouragements? Most certainly, if you are new creatures in Christ Jesus; for if it had been God's pleasure to destroy you, he would not have quickened you by his Spirit, nor have turned your feet into the narrow path. And why did he not leave you to perish in your sins! He was

under no obligation to change your hearts, or to bring you to repentance; and as the work of grace is the execution of his gracious purpose, his motive was love, and the end he contemplated was your salvation. Make your calling sure, and you will have no reason to doubt your election. As the gift of his Son was a costly proof of his good will to men, the gift of his Spirit is a certain evidence of your interest in his salvation; and having redeemed you from the curse of the law, and called you by his Gospel, he will not disappoint the hope to which he has begotten you, nor suffer you to sink under the curse of the law you have broken. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v. 8—10.)

But to avail yourselves of the full benefit of St. Paul's argumentation, you must neither overlook the Lord's work, nor forget his pro-

mises. The apostle reasons from the past to the future; and so must you, or you are likely to remain in that darkness from which it is your desire to be delivered. It is not only *wrong* to disregard the first impressions and convictions of the Spirit;—it is ingratitude, yea, it is *sin* to do so. Either the first pulsations of spiritual life are of God, or they are not; but as they are of God, they ought to be considered as striking and infallible indications of returning moral health, and of his access to the heart for the purpose of enthroning himself upon its affections. The first prayer the penitent offers, and the first tear he sheds, call as loudly for his gratitude to the Almighty, as the hope of the joyful, or the song of the triumphant. "*That* is not a true sense of our unworthiness," says the great Charnock, "which keeps us from Christ;" neither is *that* unfeigned humility which casts a veil over the first sketchings of the Spirit on the heart, and which refuses the consolation afforded by one evidence, because of the absence of another. It must be a great point of consideration with you to preserve, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, a grateful recollection of what he has done for

you. You are not to be argued out of your convictions; nor must you yield the victories you have gained over the world, the flesh, and the devil, to any of your adversaries. It is as necessary for you to acknowledge what grace has done, as it is that you should conscientiously avoid, both in prayer and conversation, the phraseology to which you attach no definite meaning; or which, in reference to yourselves, would imply impressions you have never received, or convictions you have never felt. You may go too far; and you may not go far enough. "As man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven," he ought not to attribute a natural effect to a spiritual cause, nor a spiritual effect to a natural one; and unless you maintain the position in which God has placed you, and avow the attachments he has enabled you to form, the inconsistency you allow will prove a hinderance to the progress you are anxious to make. It was the declaration of David, and let it be yours also, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." (Ps. lxvi. 16.)

Come, then, and at once declare yourselves

on the Lord's side. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Why should you not identify yourselves with the people you love, and enjoy with them the privileges of the sanctuary? From what you have seen and felt, you are placed under solemn obligations to confess the Saviour; and if you cannot do this as saints, happy in God's salvation, you must neither be ashamed nor afraid to do it as sinners, seeking the blessings of that salvation. There are babes, as well as young men and fathers, in the church; and though you have not entered by faith into spiritual rest, yet, as you are labouring to enter, you are encouraged by the promises and counselled by the precepts of the Gospel. If the Lord's people were classified according to their age and experience, you might not be able to place yourselves with the peaceful and happy; but you would with the sorrowful and distressed; and this you should do. You ought to come forth with your convictions, whether few or many; and with your impressions, whether feeble or powerful. The world ought to know, by your obedience to the Lord's precepts, that you are not *of* the world. Of all persons, *you* ought

to be decided! It is not one bold effort, or one decisive step that will meet the pressing necessities of a case like yours. There must be a succession of efforts, bold and consistent; and decision of character, entire and uniform. The principles which have preserved you in the world, must settle down into religious habits in the church. When tempted to evil, you *have said*, This I *cannot* do, because of the fear of the Lord; and when tempted to neglect either Christian privilege or duty, you *must say*, This I *dare* not do, because of the love of God. If the invitations of the Gospel were addressed only to the assured and the confident, then might you, "tarry till you're better;" but as God has very particularly invited and encouraged the doubting and timid, to be consistent with *yourselves*, you must be decided for *him*. You feel that you are lost sinners, and desire salvation, not only from the consequences of sin, but from its being; and still you hesitate and linger, when you ought to determine, and, in God's strength, advance. The remedy for all your ills and for all your complaints is with Jesus; and that remedy is likely to be efficacious, when the

directions of the Great Physician are strictly regarded.

Man never goes to Christ till his case becomes hopeless without Christ; and if you come at all, you must come as you are, and for what you need. "The Spirit and the bride, say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) The church is saying, "Come with us, and we will do you good:" let your reply be, and that promptly, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." Christian intercourse is favourable to the progress of the heart in the knowledge of the love of God; and by availing yourselves of the sympathies and prayers of established Christians, you will be enriched by their experience, and instructed by their example. Are you fearful? Come with your fears. Are you discouraged? Come with your difficulties. There is a place at the Saviour's feet, a seat at his table, and room in his house for you. And will you not come? "All things are ready, come to the marriage;" and come without delay. Jesus bids you welcome—the Spirit invites you home—the

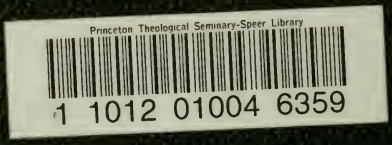
Father hails your return—"and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." The church has her mantle of charity to cast around you; and she waits, with anxious solicitude, to conduct you to the pasture where she has fed upon the provisions, reposed in the sunshine, and hymned the praises of redeeming love.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum." My dear young friends, and fellow-sinners, generally, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may be saved. But have you felt that you are sinners? that you have need of Christ as a Saviour? that you must die, and you know not how soon? Do you believe that faith in his blood and righteousness is essential to your acceptance in the Divine sight? Have you felt the importance of the Holy Spirit's influence, to quicken, to enlighten, to sanctify you? Have you prayed for its bestowment, that you may become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things? If such is your character, I say unto you, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "He waiteth to be gracious;" yea, he says,

"Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But delay not—halt not between two opinions any longer; lest you should prove a stumbling-block to others, and be found to have only a name to live, whilst you are dead in trespasses and sins. For this is the declaration of truth, and this is the Divine criterion of our Christianity: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Never—never may you forget the solemn duty of Christian consistency—for "*He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*"

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

THE END.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